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HEALEY: A ROMANCE.

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H E A L E Y

A ROMANCE

BY

JESSIE FOTHERGILL

*' Hope nothing, if I thus may speak
To thee, a woman, and thence weak.
Hope nothing, I repeat.*

*Farewell all wishes, all debate,
All prayer for this cause, or for that I
Weep, if that aid thee, but depend
Upon no help of outward friend ;
Espouse thy doom at once, and cleave
To fortitude without reprieve.'*

—WORDSWORTH

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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HEALEY: A ROMANCE.

P R O E M.

‘Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.’—ECCLESIASTES.

SOME people live who know misery only by comparison with their happiness ; so utterly have they lived in light, that they cannot conceive shade, pure and simple. They have never found their path suddenly swerve aside from the pleasant south, to go on under the bleak grey easterly rocks, or along a sunless northern shore. They have walked in warmth and light all their lives ; and if here and there, “few and far between,” transient clouds have thinly and feebly veiled their sun, they have no doubt

made much ado—have called out loudly that they were in great and unheard-of trouble, and their companions along the same radiant flower-set path have agreed with them, pitied them, fostered their conviction that they were martyrs. . . . Why not? They knew no better.’

A long pause followed that idea, and the thinker’s lips curled with bitterness as well as with amusement—a needless thing, for their expression at its best was never too sweet.

‘But there are other people, those at the opposite end of the scale; they conceive no more truly of happiness than the very happy conceive of misery. They know, at least they have heard of a thing called happiness, which must be felt, they suppose, by people whom they have seen smiling, and walking with light, untired steps; speaking in clear, unsubdued voices, which have vibrations of delight coming from causes they do not understand, and have never felt. Sometimes they may pass years—

lustrums and decades—and be no happier; their sorrow is positive and perpetual; their joy, if ever they have any, is negative; it is just a slight lifting of the cloud above them; so many pounds off the load that oppresses them; one or two shades removed from the shadow that broods over them. Sunshine, warm, rich, full, they know not; if it came, would they understand it? A long enough apprenticeship to sadness may make people incapable of being glad; may destroy their faculties for joy.

‘What was it I once read about an old man who had been long, long years in a French prison? He would have died there; but there was a Revolution, when the prison was thrown open, and his sons came to him, burst open the doors of his cell, and called upon him to come out and be free once more. He sat and looked vacantly at them. He did not know who they were; for him the meaning of ‘freedom,’ ‘life,’ ‘light,’

had fled for ever; his senses were dead; he was a gaping, mowing idiot. What a fate! But one may be better off than that. There are people who may be quiet and sober to their life's end, and yet they may know happiness, though it comes slowly, and they receive it distrustfully. It is so hard, so very hard, to believe in faith and honour, and to rest yourself upon them, when you have suffered cruelly and long from falsehood and unfaith. You are slow about trusting to love that asks nothing but love in return—to what seems like an angel's gentleness, and the most exquisite tenderness and forbearance; you are slow, because for years your love has been used for another's gain, and your devotion has been made into a convenient tool to shape your own sorrow. It is so strange to find your weaknesses and your small faults given way to and indulged, when you are accustomed to have them mocked at and treated unmercifully; so strange, that at first you

are frightened, and think something lurks behind (as usual), made on purpose to give you pain. You cannot believe that it is love for you, delight in pleasing you, that has worked this change in your life. Is it, can it be that? If it be, let me give my whole mind and soul to the keeping it; but if it be not, oh, may I never know the truth!

This was the sum of the reflections of one I knew, arrived at on a broiling July afternoon; not, perhaps, deliberately put into such words; not logically thought out and laid bare to the mind; not reasoned into shape, and then believed in, but present, all-pervading, and all-influencing, acknowledged with a mingled sense of the bitter past and the half-mistrusted present sweetness, more vivid, more intensely convincing, than any actual reasoning, however clear, could bring. What had the inward eyes of this thinker been dwelling upon before, that such reflections should end the reverie?

Busy brain and aching, beating human heart had seen (while bodily eyes were closed) something of this kind. A land full of busy, swarming life; full of workers, full of strugglers. There are in that land no stupendous mountains, no vast rolling prairies, no endless solitude of bush. The mountains are rugged and homely; the fields are small, neat, and inclosed; the forests are the reverse of boundless. It is all brown, sober, homely, and the birds' plumage and the flowers' tints are of a kind to match the hues of wood, hill, and plain. There are no great convulsions of nature in that land; steady rain and moderate sunshine are the main features of its climate. Its farms and its homesteads all seem near together: there one does not wander the day through without meeting a single fellow-man, woman, or child. And if its very rurality and 'country' seems populous, how much more so its towns! There, indeed, humanity is crowded and

closely packed—so closely that sometimes human specimens are stifled in the crush, and die without succeeding in making their voices heard. There men jostle each other in the narrow streets, and women and the weaker sort go to the wall with a regularity, and an absence of surprise or complaint, which would be ludicrous, only its very quietness, frequency, and monotony make it rather disturbing to nerves at all nicely strung.

From Land's End to Berwick-upon-Tweed, the busy land swarms, prospers, and lives on from day to day. The cries of pain, the struggles of resistance, the shrieks of rivalry, and the roar of competition, are all loud, blatant, perpetual; they drown the songs of happiness and the laughter of delight, but they in their turn are extinguished by the buzz of manufactories, the whirr of machinery, the myriad stentor voices of trade, commerce, money-making,

So far the vision has been general; now it

grows particular. The roar and hum of towns becomes the homely bustle of *a* town; the great united voice of the people breaks into a dozen or so of voices, more or less familiar. From the great mass of places is evolved a town-village, in England's busiest, blackest, most crowded northern county, Lancashire. It is ugly; it is dirty; it has tall chimneys, which vomit forth smoke that clothes the land in a garment of smuts; it has mills and factories swarming with dingy 'hands,' who, as they pass by, throw out perfumes from their garments of oil, fustian, and cotton-fluff. It has a long black canal, whose banks are fringed thickly with mills, stoneyards, and iron foundries. There are dirty canal-boats always there, whose slow career is guided by semi-human creatures called bargemen: they kick and punch their horses and their wives, and swear with Aristidean impartiality at both. Generally keen winds blow, and often muddy rain comes sweeping

athwart the smoke from dawn to dark. But the canal at last winds its sluggish way through green fields. Cows come to its edge and drink from it; sedges, and rushes, and grey-green bents droop down to its unresponsive side; and there are hedges near by which in summer-time have been known guilty of—not bursting,—vegetation here never bursts,—but of slowly, tardily, and reluctantly unfolding into a semblance of the ‘hawthorn bloom.’

What trees there are, are stunted and scrubby. They grow upon the sides of hills, and run up little gorges, down which small noisy waterfalls come brawling and tumbling. The hills are long bleak moors, naked and gaunt for three-fourths of the year, and for the other dressed in a bright garment of purple heather, yellow bracken, and scarlet bilberry leaves.

This is not a lovable land. Its very aspect suggests hardness, chills, bleak winds, howling

and whistling over those desolate moors. Its stone walls carry ideas of poverty and coldness; its sparse crops of oats here and there; its dingy-looking sheep cropping a scanty sustenance from the short sweet grass—all these mark this land as one to which nature has been niggard in her gifts, whether of beauty or of wealth.

‘Golden summer suns, yellow in the hazy afternoon,’ thinks my dreamer, ‘and passionless moontides, may come and go; they *will* come and go; they will shine slantingly upon all I know so dreadfully well; upon the dreariness and the sweetness of that place, but I shall never see it any more—no, if I live to be a hundred. I have looked upon it for the last time.’

With this comes the vivid idea of well-known forms, once seen and spoken to every day. Perhaps they are even now pacing the familiar street, or they may be standing still, with their eyes resting upon those never-to-be-

forgotten hills. It is too much ; the pain is too keen—the thinker moves with restless trouble, clasping trembling hands, and murmurs, ‘Oh ! it is madness to think of all that ; I never will again.’

A firmly-meant resolve ; kept as faithfully as most others of its kind, that is—not at all.





CHAPTER I.

'Man's best effort fails.

Could valour save a town, Troy still had stood.'—BROWNING.

IF you please, 'm, Mr. Crier's respects, and would you favour him with a few words?'

'Crier? Yes; bring him in here.'

The servant retired, and Katharine Healey was left to wait for her return with 'Mr Crier.'

It is said that there are women who are handsome in repose; others who are handsome when animated or excited. Peace be with them! Katharine Healey belonged to neither order; one glance assured you that she was handsome at no time, and in no mood. She never, to the end of her life,

had many admirers ; and even those she had, never praised her beauty. At that moment not even the grace of an amiable expression was present to redeem her plainness. There is no need to describe her in detail : upon her face was stamped, in characters which he might read who ran, the look of an unhappy woman. From whatever cause the unhappiness arose, it was there, and it was palpable. You saw it alike in the down-drawn, rather bitter-looking mouth, in the somewhat frowning eyebrows, and in the two slight but visible lines on her forehead between the eyes. Those were the outward and visible signs of the inward and spiritual cause—unhappiness, discontent.

In a very short time 'Mr. Crier' appeared upon the scene, with a profound yet awkward bow and an obsequious smile ; and Katharine felt much as a nervous person feels when in close proximity to a large, unmanageable rat, or to a darting lizard.

He remained standing until Katharine, after her first cold 'Good afternoon,' said with, if possible, increased frigidity, 'Be seated, Mr. Crier. What is your business with me?'

'You're very good, Miss Healey,'—he said 'Ealey, and spoke with a strong Lancashire accent, a thing very different from the dialect, and not to be named in the same breath with it,—'very good to condescend to see me at all. I shouldn't ever have aspired to such a thing if I didn't know what a clever lady you are, and a just one too. You know all the hins and houts of the business, both the factory and the colliery, so well—as well as the master himself; and——'

'What is that to the purpose?' she asked, moving impatiently.

'A great deal, ma'am, if you'd only allow me to say so. For being so clever as you are, you have naturally much influence with the master—with Mr. Healey——'

There was a pause, during which Mr. Crier looked appealingly at the lady with his small, lurking eyes.

Miss Healey sat in silent attention, as if waiting for him to explain his errand, although he knew that she knew what that errand was as well as he did himself.

Mr. Crier, whatever his carnal calling, was by nature a preacher; which fact was on this occasion particularly visible, for he had thought it necessary, in order to visit Miss Healey properly, to take off his working clothes, and put on his 'Sunday' ones. Had he appeared in his everyday raiment, there would have been nothing remarkable in his appearance; he would have been simply an ordinary Lancashire operative of the superior class, small, somewhat stunted in appearance, with a face expressing a certain degree of intelligence, but with (in his case) eyes that were not perfectly frank, nor perfectly ready to meet those of his interlocutor. As it was,

he had put on his Sunday clothes, and with them his Sunday manner—the manner with which he was wont to kneel down and utter an extempore prayer; the manner with which he opened his Bible, preparatory to giving out his text. For he was a preacher by profession as well as by nature, and was held in much esteem as a ‘Local’ amongst the ‘Primitives.’ His piety was of a rather self-asserting kind—of the kind that does not fear to rebuke the defective gift of a brother professor; and in the hour of reckoning, that fact had heavily weighed the balance in his disfavour.

Perhaps the consciousness of this kept him silent until his hearer asked, with an appearance of very little interest, ‘What has my influence with him—supposing I have that influence—to do with your errand?’

‘Oh, Miss Healey, it is a sore thing for me to be brought so low. You can do anything with Mr. Healey, and if——’

'Confine yourself to facts, if you please,' said Katharine, who appeared to differ from most women in her utter refusal to be stroked down by flattery. Perhaps she was not aware that Mr. Crier's great hope lay in his 'silver tongue,' which he had anxiously schooled to say the things he thought most likely to be sweet to her ears. Good man! he was not wanting in penetration—she liked nothing better than for people to say they thought she 'could do anything with Mr. Healey;' only they must say it in a particular way—not Mr. Crier's way. She continued, with asperity, 'If you have only come to tell me that I have influence with my brother, you had much better have stayed at home. I suppose the fact of the matter is, you want me to use my influence in some way. Pray, be brief!'

Goaded at last into the indicative mood, Mr. Crier took up his parable:

'I know I have not acted just as honour-

able as I ought, Miss; the devil tempted me, and I did sin, being over-confident in my own filthy rags of self-righteousness. I look upon my fall as a discipline from above——'

'I look upon it as a theft, Mr. Crier,' interrupted Katharine; a dry smile parting her lips, and a certain admiration of Mr. Crier's ingenuity giving her a look of rather more interest.

'I *did* fall, Miss, but not so far as Mr. Healey—for whom I have a true Christian regard, in spite of his hardness to me—chooses to suppose. I've been overlooker now ten years at the pits, and it's not far as I've gone wrong this time: but, Miss, if I was to go near Mr. Wilfrid, he'd make no more of knocking me down, 'specially in one of his' ('drunken tantrums' was on the tip of Mr. Crier's tongue, but a certain expression in Miss Healey's face caused him to alter his form of speech) 'severer moments, no more than if I was——, but' (rapidly) 'I'm

sure such a gentleman as he is, if he knew how I've been tempted, and how I have repented—and with the Lord's help I *have* repented truly—if he only knew, he'd be the last to cast me upon the world without a character. I believe,' continued he, trying to call up an expression of profound conviction, 'that if my case was to be properly explained to him, he'd take me on again up at works. I've laid it before the Lord every day three times, as Daniel did; and it's borne in upon my mind, so as I can't withstand it, as how such would be the result of a fair explanation.'

'Well?'

Mr. Crier was silently disconcerted for a moment. It has a chilling effect upon the nervous system to find the 'fine frenzy' which it has cost one so much trouble to get up, received with a judicial 'well?'

'Oh, Miss Healey! surely your heart tells you what I mean. It's a mediator I need;

one as will intercede for me. If *you* would be so good, you would earn the blessing of ('an honest man' is the natural sequence of that commencement, but providentially Mr. Crier was enabled to pause in time) a repentant offender. In short, will you speak for me with the master, and ask him to take me on again?'

'On what grounds?' asked Miss Healey; and Mr. Crier found himself unconsciously prepared to support the views of those who hold that woman is spoiled by having eyes too clear, or a doubting, sceptical tendency of the mind.

'Repentance, sincere, hearty repentance, and reformation, and a steady attention to all his interests, so far as can be reconciled with a life ordered by grace.'

'You have known him for ten years; is he a man to listen to that kind of twaddle?'

'You would know how to make him listen to it, Miss Healey. Your hinfluence——'

‘That means that you want to start afresh on the strength of a parcel of lies; for any good that I said of you would be false. I know no good of you, whereas I do know a great deal of evil. I don’t think that plan will answer.’

Mr. Crier was impolitic enough to allow a deep shade of anger to merge into and overcome the trusting, prayerful look with which he had hitherto adorned his face.

‘Then you won’t say anything for me? You refuse to put in a good word, even to save me from ruin?’

‘I consider that my brother did right to dismiss you, and I shall not try to get him to take you on again. What had your conduct been for years? One long series of petty thefts and deceptions; a continuous course of ingratitude to a master who never did a stingy thing to his servants in his life. I have a very strong impression, I may almost say a certainty, that your

conversion has only been caused by the exposure of your conduct. Had you been able to conceal that any longer, your repentance would have kept for an indefinite time. You ought to be very grateful that Mr. Healey does not prosecute you. I hate a hypocrite, and I shall not attempt to influence my brother's decision. And now I think we understand one another. I wish you good afternoon; less assurance and more honesty.'

She had rung the bell some few moments before finishing this speech, and the servant was now waiting; nay, she had even heard the last words, and was endeavouring to stifle an untimely smile.

Miss Healey had not spared her visitor—she seldom did spare people when they displeased her. Her gloomy, discontented expression was now merged into one of severe and haughty disapproval: her deep eyes were fixed full upon the ex-overlooker's

face, and she turned to the maid, and said, curtly, 'Let Mr. Crier out.'

But Mr. Crier was not yet gone. His instinct had not been fine enough to lead him to say the right thing to win Miss Healey's indulgence, but his parts were quite bright enough for him to know accurately what would gall and wound her. He rose, and, grasping his hat in both hands, said, in accents of pious forgiveness—

'The Lord send you a softer 'eart, Miss Healey! I shall wrestle in prayer for you every day, and I trust that my 'umble petitions may be in some degree instrumental in working a change both in your own and your unfortunate brother's unregenerate 'earts. Hi forgive you, Miss. Good afternoon! God bless you!'

With this last shot he followed the servant, who had quite ceased to have any inclination to laugh. Indeed, the look on Katharine's face might have appalled a bolder woman

than that ignorant maid-servant. Black as night, a frown had taken possession of her brow at Crier's words, 'your unfortunate brother.' She did not speak, but the gentleman cut short his speech, which he had meant to be much longer, unwilling to face that look any more. He was gone; and Katharine again sat down upon the couch on which she had been reposing when he came.

There was no sewing, fancy-work, novel, or feminine trifle of any kind near her. Some newspapers, writing materials, and a heap of letters, were her surroundings. The slight flush that had risen to her cheeks as she lectured Abraham Crier—or, to give him the title by which he was best known, 'Ab' o' Ben's'—died away. The lips closed one upon the other as closely and as unresignedly as ever; the slight frown took possession of her brow again; she leaned her chin upon her hand, and resumed the reverie, or what-

ever it was, in which she had been engaged before he came. Clearly, Mr. Crier's visit did not strike her as being an event of the least importance. She was not thinking of him, but of other things — of the troubles which made her life bitter to her, and poisoned what should have been her hey-day of youth and happiness, turning it into a very night of dulness, sorrow, and despondency. These troubles she carried about with her wherever she went; they were her companions always, by day and by night, and yet they were neither money troubles nor love troubles.

So she sat still, brooding over the familiar woes which were as constant as unwelcome guests in her mind, and unconscious that she had that afternoon made an enemy of one who had hitherto been, if not absolutely attached to her, at least well enough disposed towards her.

Presently she raised her eyes and saw the

pile of letters on the table. She roused herself, took her pen in her hand, and once more the accustomed fingers toiled patiently over the paper—writing those driest of all documents, business letters. She had more to do than usual, for Crier, the overlooker at the Healey coal-pits, had been discharged at a moment's notice by his hot-tempered master, Wilfrid Healey; a new overlooker had not yet been engaged, and Katharine had all the correspondence to do.

Whilst she was still busy the afternoon post came in. Katharine opened the bag. What a number of letters fell out! Wilfrid had advertised in the Manchester papers for an overlooker, and here was the first batch of answers. Some Katharine unhesitatingly tore up after glancing at them, and tossed them into the waste - paper basket beside her. Others she laid aside — Wilfrid must see them; for she, though she had all the trouble, and much of the responsibility of a large

business and property, had no final authority. She might painfully and laboriously work out the sum; another would read the answer.

At last she had written all that then needed to be done; she summoned a servant — once more, and putting the letters into the bag, bade her give them to the groom when he came for them. In the kitchen the waitress felt it incumbent upon her to say to Emma, the cook—

‘For goodness’ sake, Emma, look ’ere! Miss Healey’s been writing the ’ole of this blessid afternoon. She does look so tired, and Master that *inconsiderate* a-turning off Mr. Crier! He don’t seem to care a bit that it gives his sister double work to do.’

‘Men always is like that, so thoughtless,’ replied Cook, who believed that such carelessness was a thing to admire, a proof of ‘a masculine mind.’

The arrival of the man who took the letters to and from the post here created a diversion,

and made it necessary to deliver up the bag wherein reposed the result of Miss Healey's labours. He went away with his freight, and the kitchen tea was soon in full swing, when the characters, doings, likes, and dislikes of the parlour inhabitants were freely discussed, together with their position in the parish of Hamerton in particular, and upon the social ladder in general.





CHAPTER II.

Lucifer. Look on me, woman ! Am I beautiful ?

Eve. Thou hast a glorious darkness.

Luc. No more ?

Eve. I think, no more.

—MRS. BROWNING.

THE dinner-bell sounded at the appointed time, and Katharine went into the dining-room, to find there her brother Wilfrid standing on the hearth-rug, as he had come in from Manchester a few minutes before.

She saluted him with a quiet ‘Good evening,’ which was returned with a half-nod and a murmur, and then they began dinner.

For some time there was silence between them, which silence I will use in trying to give you some impression, good, bad, or indifferent, of this brother and sister—a couple who, so

far as relations, or near kith or kin went, were alone in the world, and therefore, one might suppose, somewhat attached the one to the other,

Wilfrid was seven years older than Katharine. There had been others between them, who were now all dead; one, a young brother, the last to go, had been dead six years.

All the physical beauty the pair could boast lay with Wilfrid—no mean share, so any one must have said. He was a tall man, with a figure as nearly perfect as possible; robust, graceful, well knit, and haughty. His head was a nobly-shaped one, and he carried it proudly, as a man who has nothing to be ashamed of. In the handsome frank face was not a trace of weakness of any kind. The features which could be seen, were clear-cut and decided; the mouth one could hardly pronounce upon, because of the heavy moustache that shaded it, but the chin was a square,

firm, masculine one, though not clumsy. Most people would turn to look after him as he casually passed them ; none, either man or woman, ever knew him and forgot him.

Judging from all one saw, one would fondly suppose that he was a brother whom a sister might dote upon ; her doting tempered with some wholesome fear ; a son whom a mother might worship, and a father glory in ; a man whom his mistress might love to distraction, whom a wife might idolize and revere. In point of fact, and apart from the sentiments he might be supposed to inspire in the maternal, sororal, and other bosoms, his mother, long before she died, had trembled both at him and for him ; his father had drunk himself to death, none the less rapidly from the knowledge that it was not improbable his son might follow his example. His sister found in him her world and her religion, her torture and her delight.

She knew that she was not handsome, nor

attractive in appearance. Her face was long, thin, and sallow ; her eyes were deep and eager-looking, with the eagerness of one who has few joys and many fears, except when they wore their veil of dumb endurance, and then they were sad and lack-lustre enough. She was slight, too—you might safely call her thin ; she was dull, inanimate, and unsympathetic (so she often informed herself). All she was good for, was to drudge for Wilfrid, and let him take his own way—that way which led she knew not whither, and dared not try to guess.

What chance Katharine's will might have stood against Wilfrid's, had she chosen to exert it, neither he nor she knew ; and he, at any rate, never attempted a conjecture upon the subject ; why should he, when she uniformly submitted to him silently and readily, apparently desiring no other rule of conduct than his pleasure ? Wilfrid was far too clever a man not to know that his sister was a

clever woman, and to see how valuable she might be to him. He had spared no pains with her ; he had been patient, gentle, and unwearying in his lessons, and he had his reward. She was all he could wish ; she understood his affairs ; she managed his property and his business well ; she never struck work ; she wanted no wages ; she never murmured or repined ; in her case, the word ‘Katharine,’ was another word for discretion, prudence, and far-sightedness. Wilfrid sometimes wondered at woman-haters, for to him the existence of women was quite sufficiently accounted for. He divided them, in his own mind, into two classes, clever women and fools. The clever women were in the world to be of use to clever men ; the fools to propagate the human race—in both cases as assistants or helps to man. Katharine was the first to break the silence, by saying something about the state of the market, to which he replied that trade was slack.

‘Not at Healey,’ she answered, reverting to the colliery. ‘Job Armitage has been doing manager to-day, but he has no head. Two complaints have come of orders not attended to; there must be no time lost, Wilfrid, about engaging some one.’

‘That’s easily said. I may not be able to lay my hand upon the right man all at once. My next overlooker must be a different sort of fellow from the last. I shall be hard to suit this time.’

‘I hope you will choose as quickly as you can.’

Her brother frowned impatiently as he answered, ‘I have no patience with that canting rascal, nor any of his sort. Those pious fellows are so busy praying not to be led into temptation, that they never know when they are in the middle of it. They get so full of grace that they can hold no other quality, and they are so taken up with looking after their neighbours’ shortcomings, that

they can't distinguish between their own goods and other people's.'

'Well, a number of answers to your advertisement came this afternoon; I have kept some of them for you to look at. I suppose you have quite done with Crier; you wouldn't take him on again?'

'Are you mad, Kate?'

'He was here this afternoon. He seems in a very penitent frame of mind.'

Not detecting, or not caring to notice, the lurking sneer in her voice, Wilfrid answered, shortly—

'Here this afternoon? And you didn't turn him away from the door? If I'd been here——'

'Most likely he timed his visit when he knew you were not at home. I saw him, heard him, and lectured him.'

'What did he want?'

'He wished me to intercede with you for him.'

‘And you believed all his cant, of course?’

‘On the contrary, I sent him about his business, after telling him he was a hypocrite. He blessed and forgave both you and me, and went away.’

‘Then haven’t you been at the works at all to-day?’

‘Yes; I have been both to the mill and to Healey. Armitage is of no use; and I cannot be there all day. Indeed, Wilfrid, we *must* have an overlooker, and that soon.’

‘Where are the letters?’

‘In the library.’

He made no further remark; and Katharine went to her own sitting-room, to her usual sombre, unhopeful meditations, which seemed to grow drearier every day. She might have said with Lucifer, ‘All things grow sadder to me one by one;’ for indeed each solitary evening appeared to her more empty, more weary, more hopeless than the last.



CHAPTER III.

‘What, then,’ I said, ‘is Love a mortal?’ . . . ‘Like those things which I have before instanced, he is neither mortal nor immortal, but something intermediate.’ ‘What is that, O Diotima?’ ‘A great dæmon, Sokrates; and everything dæmoniacal holds an intermediate place between what is divine and what is mortal.’

SHELLEY’S *Banquet of Plato*.



KATHARINE looked up slowly when a servant came in, saying—

‘Mr. Kay, ma’am, desires his compliments, and wishes to know if he may see you.’

For a moment she paused, looking doubtfully and reflectively through the window, then down at her book. At last she said, as if with some little effort—

‘Yes; ask Mr. Kay to come to me here.’

‘I hardly knew whether you would see me,’ said Louis Kay, when he had shaken hands.

'You are so busy, and must be so fatigued in the evening, that I feared I might be disturbing you.'

The words were spoken with courtesy and deference, yet they elicited from her no cordial assurance that he was welcome. She merely said—

'It was considerate of you to think of it; but my work during the day makes me glad of any relaxation in the evening. Do you want to see Wilfrid?'

'I came to see you; but of course I shall be glad to see him too.'

Louis Kay and the Healeys were second cousins. Louis' mother and the Healeys' father had been brothers' children, Frances Healey having become the wife of 'Squire' Kay of Stanlaw. She was yet living, but her husband had been dead many years—since before Louis came of age, and he was now over thirty. He was almost the only familiar acquaintance of Katharine and her

brother. He was known popularly as Healey's particular friend ; and many people wondered how he could be that and yet remain a respectable member of society.

He seated himself near Katharine, and asked if she had been out during the day.

‘I was out this morning.’

‘But where ? Riding—on business, I expect, as usual ?’

‘Yes.’

‘Well, that kind of riding does you no good.’

‘Perhaps not. How is Mrs. Kay ?’

‘She is well, thanks. She told me yesterday that you owe her a call. She hopes to see you soon.’

‘That was, no doubt, a figure of speech. I am not so foolish as to imagine for an instant that any one cares in the least for my calls.’

‘Indeed, you are quite wrong.’

‘I am very often wrong, but not in that particular.’

There was a pause, while Mr. Kay looked once or twice at the lady, and then said, with a slight hesitation that was not unbecoming to him—

‘Pardon me, Katharine, if I venture to tell you that you are overworking yourself. You look fagged and tired. This exertion will tell upon your health.’

‘Oh, it is only for a time. I wonder if you know the true and edifying history of Abraham Crier, ex-manager at Healey?’

‘I know Wilfrid has sent him about his business; that is all.’

‘He is a very religious character, as you may be aware—quite the “brand snatched from the burning” in style.’

‘Ah! I was passing the tabernacle of the “Primitives” the other night, and I heard the voice as it were of a mighty preacher, with groans, and sounds of “awakenedness” from the congregation.’

‘No doubt Mr. Crier was expounding the

"Word." He is not the first person whose preaching and practice have failed to be in unison.'

'And whose master has consequently sent him to the right-about at a moment's notice?' said Louis, looking at her with a smile.

'Exactly. But he cannot put a competent man into his place at a moment's notice.'

'And you have to do all the work?'

'Much of it,' said she, and added, after a pause, 'Wilfrid distrusts all these people who answer advertisements. He declares he will have some one who can be recommended by a person he knows. But only imagine how long we may have to wait! I don't know what I am to do about it. What do you think?'

Unconsciously she had spoken in a tone of cordiality, had raised her eyes to his face as if she trusted him, and looked to him for help in her difficulty. Louis roused himself fully, looking not ill-pleased, and said—

‘I wonder if he would take a man on *my* recommendation.’

‘Why, of course!’ replied Katharine, quickly.
‘Do you know of one?’

‘I met a young fellow—but you will not care to hear rather a long story. It will bore you, which is exactly what I wish to avoid.’

‘It will not bore me. On the contrary, I am quite interested. I expected to have had such a long, dreary time to wait before this *lusus naturæ* was found.’

‘Nay, don’t run away with the idea that he is a prodigy. My acquaintance with him is of the very slightest. I was in Durham, last year, fox-hunting. I was staying at the Brothertons’ at Skernford, near D——, where you know there are collieries and blast-works.’

‘Yes, I know.’

‘One day my horse fell lame. He had strained a tendon by getting a stone in his foot. Of course I had to stop, and

was blaming my luck, and seeing what my horse could do in the way of getting home, when some stragglers on foot came up. There was a dozen or so of young fellows, and most of them jeered at me, and made cutting remarks as to my horsemanship and personal appearance—just as they do here.'

Katharine nodded.

'Just then another man passed by; but when he saw what had happened, he offered to help me. We soon found that all we could do was to walk my horse back; and on the way I got into conversation with my good Samaritan, and he told me part of his history. He did not volunteer it, but it came out in answer to my questions. He was a Lancashire man, he told me, and his name was Earnshaw—Ughtred Earnshaw. I remember it, because I rather liked the sound of it——'

'It is true Lancashire. Well, go on.'

‘He seemed to have received a decent education, which he had improved by his own efforts, and he must have been a talented young man. He had none of that dreadful snobbish bumptiousness which so often ruins men of his class. In the course of his studies he had imbibed a good many of those heterodox notions that you and Wilfrid profess.’

Miss Healey’s eyebrows were raised for a second, and Louis went on.

‘He seemed something of a philosopher, and very independent in his way of thinking; in fact, I should say the very man Wilfrid wants, as to opinion, since he desires the opposite of Crier. He had been dismissed from a subordinate position in a colliery, because he had taken the part of some colliers against the head-man, who immediately sent him off. He was teaching some little lads and doing some book-keeping as a stop-gap. He told me he would rather be in Lancashire than anywhere;

and I promised, if ever I had the opportunity, to think of him.'

'I should be so glad if you would talk to Wilfrid about it to-night,' said she, eagerly; 'it would be a real favour.'

'How can you make out such a thing to be a favour? Don't you see that it is you who confer the favour, both upon Ughtred Earnshaw and myself?'

'I see no such thing.'

'Upon him, by putting him in the position he most desires; upon me, by letting me help you.'

'You speak as if Wilfrid had no existence.'

'I am sure I beg Wilfrid's pardon,' said Louis, frowning a little, 'or rather yours, for I don't suppose *he* would feel himself insulted.'

'No; he knows his power too well. You know, Louis, that he is the master in this and in every other situation in which I play any part. It is a mere farce to refer anything to me, and does not flatter me at all.

I do what he tells me. I arrange all the preliminaries, and he steps in and ratifies the contract; or, what is equally on the cards, demolishes the whole thing with one word.'

Louis was somewhat puzzled. Was she grumbling, or merely stating a fact? In her face was none of the expression that usually accompanies a woman's passionate murmurings against the inevitable. No raised brows or flashing eyes—no mutinous mouth, with pouted red lips—no light of excitement playing over the features. She spoke as calmly, as placidly as possible. The thing that puzzled Louis was that she should speak at all upon that subject.

The keen, vivid consciousness of her position silently affected her manner and actions at all times, but she was usually silent as the grave upon it. She never *said* that she felt her subjection; she only showed it in the proud sadness, which would have made a mother's heart ache, could she have seen it in her daughter.

She added abruptly, 'And you will send this man to us?'

'If Wilfrid agrees,' he answered gravely.

She made no reply; of Wilfrid's consent she had not the least doubt.

Louis' next words were spoken almost beseechingly.

'I will see Wilfrid before I go, Katharine; don't be in such a hurry for me to leave you. Every time I see you I find more surely that you only care for my society in so far as I can be useful to you—or to him.'

She looked at him in a startled kind of way, and, rousing herself with an effort, said—

'I know I am but a churlish companion; I'm sorry for it. Tell me, is anything going on in Hamerton? Is the usual peace brooding over that united village?'

'You should go to my mother to hear all about that. She keeps strict watch over the concerns of the whole parish, and can tell you

to a nicety how the affairs of either faction stand just now.'

'That comes of being a good churchwoman. Do you think that if I were to take great pains, go to church regularly, and always give to the collections for additional curates, the S. P. G., and the Church Clock Repairs Fund, that people would discover my great intrinsic merits, come to call upon me, and be gushing to me?'

'If any of the wretched gossips dared to slight you,' he began, angrily, 'I'd ——'

He paused to find her eyes fixed calmly upon him, and a mocking, uncanny smile upon her lips.

'My dear Louis, it is very foolish of you, and unlike your usual evenness of temper, to make so much ado about nothing. You will never persuade me, and it is useless to try and persuade yourself, that Katharine Healey is as other young women in this parish. A masculine person (I must be masculine, you

know, I do a man's work), one so strong-minded in appearance as I am, can never be liked, though both her work, habits, and appearance may be sorely against her taste and her will.'

'The "strong-minded" woman, however, has charms which those wretched little bits of bread-and-butter may wish for and strive for in vain. It has always been a matter of wonder to me that "strong-minded" should be applied as a term of reproach to a woman. Why, in heaven's name, should she glory in being weak-minded?'

'Because,' interpolated Katharine, incisively, 'she has sense enough to know that the more imbecile she can make herself appear, the more acceptable she will be to the "nobler" sex. All this cant about men wanting wives who will elevate them makes me laugh. Men want wives who are ignorant. Those women who are really ignorant, or who can most cleverly feign

ignorance, — those are the women to prosper.'

'For my part,' he replied, with some heat, 'I *hate* a namby-pamby woman.'

'I pity you. You find a namby-pamby woman soon subdued, soon wooed, soon won, soon tamed, and her mental resources *very* soon exhausted, eh?'

'Subdued—tamed?' said he, flushing a little. 'What extraordinary expressions! I claim for women equality with men. How can I pretend to subdue my equal?'

'Pooh!' said she, composedly. 'You are very foolish if you do claim that equality. A pretty mess women would make of their equality if they got it. You evidently see women through a rose-coloured glass. Most women, Louis, are fools. But I know what your "equality" means. It is much the same thing as when a young aristocrat takes up the cause of the "people." Nothing would make him so furious as to be treated

with brotherly frankness *by* one of the people. You would give women their votes and their universities, and throw open all trades and professions to them—to woman (and she would be a spectacle for gods and men when she rushed upon her prize!) but when it comes to *the* woman, the one whom you want for your own, what then? Your views and Wilfrid's upon that subject are identical.'

Wilfrid's 'views upon the woman question' may be briefly formulated thus:—

'Give woman, in the abstract, everything she clamours for, but be master of your own house, your own wife, and *all* woman-kind in any way pertaining to you. By so doing, and so only, you will insure peace at home and respect abroad.'

Katharine had spoken with her eyes looking through the window; she now turned them to Louis, and met his, fixed upon her. The two looked long and steadily at

each other. In his eyes she found neither confession nor confusion; merely calmness, kindness, and a steadfastness and strength of will before which she felt a bitter sense of impotency.

Children sometimes play at 'staring-out;' and this look of Louis and Katharine was not unlike the childish trial of steadiness, only that it had the sorrowful intensity of meaning of man and woman, who look, not in play, but each with the bitter knowledge that the other may be cheating. Katharine was the first to withdraw her eyes, saying, with a slight shrug,

'Your bump of caution must be largely developed.'

'I'll not say what I think of your discernment.'

'That may mean that you think I have none.'

'Or that I am overwhelmed at its acuteness.'

‘Well, there has been far too much talk about me. It’s a topic I hate.’

He accepted the hint instantly.

‘I will see Wilfrid at once. And will you go to my mother soon?’

‘As soon as I can.’

He bowed over her extended hand and went to seek Wilfrid.





CHAPTER IV.

‘Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg,
The murmur of the world.’

—TENNYSON.

‘Yet was she certes but a countrey lasse,
Yet she all other countrey lasses farre did passe.’

—SPENSER, *Faerie Queene*.

TWO days later, Mrs. Kay sat in her drawing-room in the afternoon, settling the affairs of the parish with its Curate. He, Mr. Blenkinsop, was highly to be respected. An excellent maxim tells us that the strength of a chain is determined by that of its weakest link. All I can say is, that Mr. Blenkinsop was not one of the strongest links of the chain clerical.

‘The Vicar thinks of doing what?’ demanded Mrs. Kay.

‘Of effecting several alterations and improvements in the parish church.’

‘Alterations ! Improvements ! Of what kind, I wonder ? What is the matter with the church ? The galleries are quite sound. They did not so much as crack even at the Confirmation last month. The pews are all taken by respectable people. I should like to know what improvements he can make.’

‘Mr. Lowe wishes to have the pews removed, and benches, free and open to all, put in. He would make a middle aisle, and have it paved with encaustic tiles ; and as he hardly hopes to prevail with the congregation to aid him in throwing out a chancel, he would have instead a rood screen, inside which would be seats for the choristers, and——’

‘I should have no objection to that, for the choristers behave worse than any other part of the congregation. I beg their pardon—I suppose they are not really part of the congregation. Their chief aim seems to me to be to stare out of countenance all the

girls at all near them. And the middle aisle that you are so anxious for——’

‘Pardon me, Mrs. Kay; the Vicar alone——’

‘The Vicar is no doubt very convenient to you in some respects. I would have him think twice before he carries out his alterations. He is not too well liked now. In a place where Dissent flourishes, as it does in Hamerton, Ritualism is not the kind of thing to go down; and when Mr. Lowe has got his middle aisle, and his free and open seats, and his rood-screen and banners, he will find they are about all the congregation he need expect. He will “improve” away his flock, and will have to act to empty benches. But better men than he have had to do that.’

Too shocked to reply, Mr. Blenkinsop held his peace.

‘Who goes with him in this project?’ continued Mrs. Kay.

‘The Openshaws and Brierleys, and one or two others.’

‘Openshaws? Oh! I know their reason. They want to get into notoriety in that way. There are people, Mr. Blenkinsop, who would stand on their heads in the church porch if they thought it would make others stop and look at them. The best way is to treat them as you do conceited children, take no notice of them.’

The Curate moved uneasily on his chair, blushed, but refrained his lips, no doubt with a superhuman effort. Burning words must have struggled within him for utterance.

‘As for the Brierleys, John Brierley does whatever Laurence Openshaw tells him. They are churchwardens, aren’t they?’

‘They are, and most liberal ones.’

‘That means, that in order to make dissent in the congregation and parish, they will throw their money up and down broadcast. If you had a couple of churchwardens such as Louis Kay and Wilfrid Healey, your Vicar would find a tight hand held over his eccentricities.’

‘Mr. Healey — never enters — a place of worship! The idea is awful!’ said the unhappy young man, goaded into a show of resistance by the lady’s last and most monstrous suggestion.

Poor little Curate! His horror was intense at the idea of a woman, a weaker vessel, speaking aloud of the ‘eccentricities’ of an ordained priest; but the idea of Louis Kay and Wilfrid Healey as churchwardens was yet more impious. If ever, in the course of his mild parochial rounds, he met the latter sinner, or saw him looming in the distance, he always turned off for refuge into the nearest cottage; for he had once been introduced to Wilfrid, and feared to be recognised and spoken to by him.

He was still blushing, fevered, and trembling with the excitement of his late denunciation of Mr. Healey, when Miss Healey was announced, and came in, holding up her habit and whip in one hand. Mr. Blenkinsop was still further disconcerted. No eligible topics of conversa-

tion presented themselves to his mind in connection with Miss Healey, a person who never went out to tea, was never seen at church, and who did not teach at the Sunday school.

‘So you have come at *last*,’ said Mrs. Kay, severely, but holding out her hand with cordiality. ‘To any one but yourself I would not have a word to say. Do you know Mr. Blenkinsop?’

‘I have not that pleasure,’ said Katharine, bowing distantly in answer to the trembling salaam of the blushing evangelist.

‘Then know him now—a reformer! He has just been talking to me, and I am quite converted. He has been planning *such* improvements in the church. Only think! you know how moderate and evangelical in his views Mr. Lowe is; well, Mr. Blenkinsop has quite corrupted him. He is going to have a rood-screen. Do you know what a rood-screen is, my dear?’

‘I’m not sure. I once read something about them, I think.’

‘Ah, you must excuse her ignorance, Mr. Blenkinsop,’ said Mrs. Kay, turning with an apologetic smile to him. ‘It is sad, though. Every factory hand in Hamerton ought to know a thing like that, more important than their alphabet, as one may say, for what is the use of reading without religion? I suppose all the poor people, for whose benefit the free and open benches are intended, *do* know what a rood-screen is, Mr. Blenkinsop?’

‘I am not in a position to say whether they do or not,’ replied the harassed young man, rendered still less at his ease by the fact that Miss Healey, leaning back in her easy-chair, was smiling a sarcastically pitying smile upon him, as she gently slapped her left hand with the gauntlet she had drawn from her right one.

‘Dear, dear!’ sighed Mrs. Kay. ‘If I might give my advice, I should say, Make it your business, before you do *anything* else,

to find out whether the cottagers of Hamerton are properly awakened to the nature and influence of a rood-screen, and its moral and religious importance. If not, if you find them ignorant—and I am afraid you will meet with a terrible amount of darkness upon such matters—then write a short but able tract to explain the subject. I'll promise to take half-a-dozen when it is published. I mean a thing written to suit their capacities, like your excellent sermons' (Mr. Blenkinsop bowed in an embarrassed manner), 'which I regret that I cannot hear oftener.'

'You are very kind. I—I think I must say good afternoon,' said Mr. Blenkinsop.

'Good afternoon; and you'll think of what I have said; and if ever you are in any difficulty, come to me. I'll do my best to help you.'

Her beaming smile confirmed her hearty words. But Mr. Blenkinsop, leaving the house with that sharp voice yet ringing in his

ears, and Katharine Healey's cool, sneering smile yet floating before his eyes, was almost crying. As his deeper mortification passed off, temper asserted itself, and he muttered to himself—

‘Lowe ought to call upon such people himself; I'll not stand it. As if one could begin to argue and dispute with a woman in her own house!’

‘Gone at *last*,’ said Mrs. Kay, complacently. ‘There is a stop put to his boasting—for a time, at any rate.’

‘What is it all about? The poor little thing looked nearly worried to death. I felt quite sorry for him.’

‘It is those abominable people, the Openshaws and Brierleys, who want to turn the place upside down with their mummerly. The *fact is*, that until now the first people in the parish have always been ourselves, the Healeys, and the Ormerods. But now we take no part in public affairs; you see

Louis says he will not be bothered with the parish; you and Wilfrid have taken up these dreadful free-thinking ideas, and never even enter your own parish church; the Ormerods are so stingy, and will have nothing to say in the matter, unless they can order things exactly in their own way, and have Vicar and parish alike bowing down to them, that——'

'That the other party, whose views agree with Mr. Lowe's, have stepped in, and now fill the place you used to hold. I am afraid you must cry "Ichabod!" And, indeed, I don't see why you should expect anything else. Wilfrid has told me all about it. I asked him. He says there are two chief factions in Hamerton — the "No Popery," which is what you belong to; and the Ritualistic or Jesuit-in-disguise party.'

'Wilfrid! I wonder what Wilfrid knows about it.'

'Laurence Openshaw is a very gentlemanly

young fellow; and though neither Wilfrid nor I can help laughing at his views, we are sure he is in earnest.'

'In earnest to bring England into the hands of Rome again.'

'Bah! That worn-out old battle-cry again. Did you ever read "Mr. Pips, his Diary"?''

'Never heard of such a thing.'

'Well, we have it at home, with illustrations, and there is one called "Exeter Hall, with a Prospect of a Christian Gentleman denouncing y^e Pope." It would do you good to see it.'

'Humph!'

'We all know *your* weakness,' continued Miss Healey, remorselessly; 'it is going to hear these dreadful "awakening" preachers. And yet you rave against the Ritualists, simply because they are awakened in a different manner from you. You should remember that constitutions differ. Some people can bear to be awakened with a shake and a

shout, but others can only do to be roused gently.'

'I don't *usually* receive long lectures from young lady callers.'

'Ah, I beg your pardon, but really these Hamertonian storms in a tea-cup do so amuse me.'

'I'm glad you find anything' amusing in them; I don't. The parish is as different as possible from ——'

'I know what you are going to say. In dear old Doctor Wilkinson's time, when there was more sermon than service, and when the Kays and the Healeys divided the parish between them, and had the largest and best-cushioned pews in the church. No doubt those were the good old days to you, but I daresay Laurence Openshaw thinks the present time much more desirable. People's ideas of the Millennium vary with their dispositions.'

'Laurence Openshaw's father began life as

a weaver in Manchester,' said Mrs. Kay, slowly, solemnly, and triumphantly.

'I know he did. But he ended it as one of the largest mill - owners in Hamerton, which is saying not a little.'

'I declare, from the way in which you talk, one might almost fancy you *knew* Laurence Openshaw!'

'I do. He dined with us a week ago.'

Again Mrs. Kay said, 'Humph!' Other remarks seemed to fail her.

'I must go now,' said Katharine. 'How is Louis?'

'Very well. Have you seen him lately?'

'He called upon me on Tuesday evening. I am going to Healey now, and must make haste.'

'Oh, by the by, Katharine, your manager at Healey has been turned off, I hear.'

'I know.'

'Crier, a most respectable person. He was to have been married to that nice modest

girl, Sara Holden, but he is thrown upon the world without a character, and of course cannot think of any such thing now. I expect it is some mad freak of Wilfrid's.'

'I must decline to explain. As for work, let him go to Thanshope or Todmorden and get work there. He can weave, I know.'

'Spoken just like a business woman, Katharine. What a come-down for him to turn weaver after being overlooker at Healey! You don't think of his feelings.'

'No, I don't; nor did he think of the difference between honesty and dishonesty.'

With which she held out her hand. They parted excellent friends, as they had done fifty times before after just such scenes.

Katharine rode at a smart pace towards Healey, where the coal-pits were, out of which 'that young scamp, Wilfrid Healey,' was making money so rapidly. Katharine was alone; she always rode alone.

To get to Healey, which lay on the edge

of the moors, she had to pass through the village of Hamerton. It consisted of one long, straggling, principal street, which wound rather uphill at the southern end, towards Thanshope. From this chief street branched off several small off-shoots of cottages and small houses. On the left hand, going northwards, was the church, which with its churchyard was built upon a level several feet above the road.

The church constituted a centre from which radiated three roads. There was that down which Katharine had ridden: it led, when you had left houses and mills behind, over bleak and desolate border moors into Yorkshire. Then, again, was a long, flat, dreary-looking road, which also led into Yorkshire, but in a different direction. Finally, there was the road past the church itself, leading through the village to Thanshope, Manchester, and dirt.

The Thanshope people considered Hamer-

ton 'quite in the country ;' and so in a measure it was. Its great houses all stood detached in grounds of their own ; and beyond the village lay fields, very green and damp-looking, not because of the fertile soil, but because Hamerton enjoyed the privilege of being one of the several places where a much greater amount of rain falls during the year than anywhere else in England.

But even in the country and among the fields it was impossible to mistake that you were in a manufacturing district. Starting out of the green meadows would rise a great mill, with its inevitable tall chimney, and the murky cloud of smoke hanging above or streaming upon the breeze. Dotted about upon the moors, or standing beside the remote cross-country roads, were fulling-mills ; these, too, had long chimneys, and each was further adorned with a tenter-field, which might be seen from afar off, with long lines of white and scarlet flannel stretched out upon the

tenters to dry or bleach in the fresh moorland air.

At that hour in the afternoon, between five and six, the mills had not yet stopped, and the village street was quiet and deserted. Here and there might be seen a few children playing, or a woman looking out from a cottage door, as the horse's hoofs rattled over the pavement.

One or two looked after Katharine as she passed, and discussed her advent.

'Eh, yon's Kate Healey.' ('Healey' in Lancashire becomes 'Yelley.') 'Hoo's bound up to th' pit again.'

One more reflective than the rest added, phlegmatically—

'Bi' th' mass, it's little pleasure 'at hoo has of hoo're life!'

The usual knot of idlers was gathered round the wall at the corner of the road leading to the railway station. Up this road Katharine turned, and comments ran after her — com-

ments from lips unfettered by either the instinct of politeness or its cultivated imitation. Upon the whole, however, the comments were favourable. 'Kate,' it was admitted, never forgot a friend, however obscure; and though she had been known to utter home truths with a force of expression that stung through even those blunt sensibilities, upon the subjects of drunkenness, wife-beating, *et id genus omne*, yet her benefits had often been bestowed at the same time with no niggard hand, and often behind the 'railing' had lurked bits of good advice which some of the more intelligent culprits had acted upon with gain and advantage to themselves.

She, meanwhile, cantered swiftly away across the railway lines, over the bridge that spanned the canal, and up a narrow lane leading to the Healey colliery.

Half-a-mile up the lane, and then she turned in at the great gates, inside which was a large space, cinder-paved, and pervaded with gaunt-

looking structures ; cranes and hoists and windlasses. On the left hand was the building containing the office and counting-house. Katharine rode straight up to the office and asked if there were any letters. Two or three were given her, one of which was a short note, signed ' Ughtred Earnshaw,' intimating that the writer would call at the office to-morrow, at four in the afternoon.

Katharine put this and the other letters into the leather bag which hung at her waist, and called out ' Armitage !' A man, a sheepish-looking fellow, slouched out. Katharine asked him what they had been doing that day.

' We'n bin uncommon throng (busy). Six carts is waitin' now at pit mouth ; they'n bin there sin' noon, and they'll have to gang as they coom—empty,' said he, with stolid complacency.

' And why ? What have you been doing ? Why have not you seen that they were attended to ?'

' Eh ! bi' th' mon, it's none so easy. I

reckon lads is playin' theirselves a bit while t'naw o'erlooker cooms.'

'What time is it? Ten minutes to six. Go and send away those men that are waiting. Tell them to come early to-morrow; and see that they are supplied. I shall be up in the morning.'

'Appen you could gi' me a notion o' when t'naw chap'll be here? I'm fair stalled o' bein' sham manager. If he cooms na' this week end I'm for leaving.'

'I expect he will be here this week end; at any rate on Monday morning. Surely you can remain till the end of the week?'

'Well! 'appen I mun strive t'oblige ye,' was the reluctant response; and Katharine with a brief nod rode away, hoping to get home before the mill-gates should all be thrown open, and the streets be filled with the swarming 'hands' on their way home from work. But she did not escape. When she got down into the village, the street was full of men

and women, in clattering clogs, and (the girls) in long dingy pinafores, coloured handkerchiefs on their heads, limp petticoats, and swinging arms.

Katharine looked absently at the groups she passed, nodding recognition here and there ; but suddenly she saw a face which brought more than recognition — remembrance. She drew rein and beckoned ; in answer to which signal a girl stepped from the footpath to her, and stood, half smiling, beside her horse.

The young woman who answered Katharine's summons was a tall and graceful creature. As she stepped out from the ranks that were quickly passing along the footpath, her figure showed stately and upright. There was a perfectly harmonious grace in her movements, which the barbarously-shaped pinafore and ill-cut dress could not conceal ; and the face that was set in the frame of a red cotton kerchief was worthy of a more elegant head-dress. Her youth and beauty triumphed over

even the dress of a Lancashire factory-girl. Her face was beautiful with the beauty of regular classic lines, and lovelier far with the loveliness of fresh, unsullied, un-care-stricken happiness. She had very dark brown hair and eyes, and a pale but clear complexion. She looked up at Katharine as she waited for her to speak, and, could you have seen them, you would have said that the rich woman was as plain and awkward as the poor one was lovely, amiable, and engaging.

‘I wanted to ask you a question or two, Sara,’ began Miss Healey. ‘Abraham Crier lodged with you and your mother, did not he?’

‘Ay, he did,’ said Sara, a quick blush spreading over her face.

Katharine took the blush for a sign of modest confusion, and said, in her curt uncompromising way,—

‘You know he has been dismissed for bad conduct?’

‘I’ve heerd say so.’

‘I wish to say, that though it may seem very hard to you and him that this should have happened, and that he should be thrown out of work without a character, yet it is really the best thing for *you*, at any rate. I should advise you not to think anything more about him. Depend upon it he would not make a good husband.’

Sara Holden’s face was crimson, and her eyes full of tears. She looked up into the grave, severe face above her, and said, with restrained tears in her voice—

‘I canna think what you’d be *at*. What’s Ab o’ Ben’s to me?’

‘You were going to be married to him, were not you?’

‘Not I, for sure,’ was the rather indignant answer.

‘Then I am sure I beg your pardon. I was told that his prospects were ruined, and that you and he could not be married.’

‘Then some one told you false.’

‘Ah, I’ll keep you no longer. Good afternoon. Have nothing to do with Crier.’

With a nod she rode away; and Sara Holden, after looking at her for a short time, as though bewildered, sighed a little, and resumed her way home to her mother and tea.





CHAPTER V.

‘For none than he a purer heart could have :

Of nought in heaven or earth was he the slave.’

—SHELLEY, *Prince Athanase*.



ILFRID, on Friday morning, coming to Katharine in the library, said—

‘It’s nearly eleven. I’ve not been to the works this morning, and I’m going to Manchester, so you had better go to the mill, and to Healey as well.’

‘I shall set off directly. But, Wilfrid, what time shall you be back, because this man Earnshaw is to call at the office at four?’

‘I shall not be home by that time. You must see him yourself.’

‘ But suppose I like him very much, and engage him, you may dislike him just as much, and want to have nothing to do with him.’

Wilfrid stood lightly holding the door-handle, and thinking of what she had said—thinking how well he had trained his sister ; that she really knew her place admirably ; that she had even attained to that height of excellence supposed to be unknown to women—that of foreseeing and contemplating the entire upsetting of her wishes and opinions upon a given subject without railing or protesting. What an excellent thing it is to be master in your own house ; to have your servants and family trained to intelligent yet unquestioning obedience ! Very few men could attain to this state, which might almost, from its very rarity, be classed amongst the beatitudes. But he had done it—witness the living proof of his power now seated before him, looking into his face, waiting upon his will.

There was something quite bland in his voice as he answered—

‘That’s true, but I can trust a good deal to your judgment, Kate ; and if you like the looks of the fellow, and engage him, he shall stay for a quarter at any rate. If you do take him, tell him to call upon me here this evening, that I may just see him, you know.’

‘Very well ; I understand.’

‘There’s the cart,’ added Wilfrid, glancing out of the window ; ‘I must be off. You understand, Kitty ? Unless you think him a superior kind of fellow, have nothing to do with him.’

‘Of course. I understand.’

Wilfrid, as he drove away, reflected that when Kate said she understood a thing she meant it.

With Katharine’s morning rounds we have nothing to do ; she finished them, and in the afternoon, at a little past four, came into the colliery yard. Into the dingy little office

with its old battered desk and high stools, with its almanac, inkstands, and dirty blotting-pad, and with the slouching form of Job Armitage, hands in pockets, and venerable hat over dull, sullen eyes, as usual. Nothing fresh met her view.

‘Has no one come?’ she asked.

‘Ay, there’s a chap, somewheers; he said as how he’d go and tak a look around, like. Mun I fot (fetch) him?’

‘Yes, please.’

She hung her horse’s bridle on a hook in the lintel, re-entered the office, and went to the desk. She opened and began to read a circular which lay upon it, and in every line of her face was gravity, business, care.

She was reading still when the heavy foot of Job Armitage, followed by a lighter but very firm one, was heard, and the voice of Job himself said—

‘He’s here, is t’chap as yo’ wanted.’

She looked up absently, and saw Ughtred Earnshaw.

Would he do for their manager? It was in order to find that out that she continued to look at him. Would he be sharp enough, quick enough, business-like enough? Was he practical yet honest, firm yet cheery? Could he play the part of master to the rough pitmen, while at the same time he was servant to Wilfrid Healey? All this ran rapidly through her mind; but her first words were—

‘Armitage, you can find something to do outside; and shut the door after you. I want to speak to this’ (‘person’ was on her lips, but it stuck there)—‘to Mr. Earnshaw.’

As Armitage took his departure, she added to the other—

‘You are Ughtred Earnshaw, I suppose?’

‘I am, and——’ His expression said, ‘And you?’

‘I am Miss Healey. My brother is in

Manchester to-day, so you will consider me as his representative.'

Earnshaw bowed; and she decided that he would hardly do, for his bow was the bow of a gentleman; and they wanted not a gentleman, but an overlooker.

She then began to question him upon several matters; and while she questions and he answers, let me try to describe him.'

He was twenty-seven years old, but he might, judging simply from appearance, have been any age from twenty to forty. He was six feet in height, and sparely, though neither weakly nor loosely, built. His face was pale and thin; few people would have called it agreeable or prepossessing, but those few would have been discerning and refined natures. Level eyebrows of dark brown, over eyes which were considered by those who ever had him in their minds—and at that time there were only three people in the world who ever gave him a

thought—these eyes, then, were supposed by them to be rather slow and stupid; they were certainly devoid of any attractive glitter, for they seldom smiled, and as seldom flashed. They were dark blue, and gave one the idea that their owner was perhaps rather a sleepy, indifferent sort of fellow; for not all people can distinguish between the dulness of indifference or incapability, and the quiet repose of assured strength and power. And then, too, those quiet eyes could flash when needful. His mouth was a firmly-closed, clearly-cut one, but invisible because of his moustache. His forehead was broad, but not very high; it was the only feature from which Katharine could gather any clue to his character; and, after studying it a while, she was fain to own that she had found nothing out from it. There were two or three lines upon it; they might be the result of care, or thought, or anxiety, or they might not. The mere mechanical

attention to long rows of figures will wrinkle some men's foreheads, and a furrowed brow is by no means an infallible criterion of a fine mind.

Katharine, while questioning him, had been studying his face intently, with a view to finding out something of his character, for she had a deep sense of responsibility on her mind. It was not to gratify any feeling of curiosity that she looked, trying to read his mind from his face's fashion; it was that she might learn whether he was what Wilfrid wanted.

In either case, whether she looked from curiosity or for information, the result was the same. If she had stood for an hour interrogating a fossil fish, mammal, or reptile as to its feelings, tastes, or habits, her labour would have been rewarded just as fully as it was now. In each case the result would have been the same—*nil*. Whatever Earnshaw's capabilities for the post he

desired (and each of his answers led her to think more highly of them), he had certainly the gift of successfully concealing his feelings, desires, emotions, from all outsiders. His manner told no more than his face. Nothing led her to suppose that he cared a straw whether she engaged him or dismissed him. He answered every question with promptitude and intelligence, showing very plainly that he knew thoroughly the business he wished to undertake.

Finally, Katharine asked him why he had been dismissed his last situation. He told her exactly what Louis Kay had said on the evening he had spoken of him, and added—

‘In every respect but that of siding with the men that time, they will, I think, give me a good character. I will write their address.’

He did so, and Katharine, folding up the paper, said,

‘I will write to them this afternoon, and if I have a favourable report from them, I — we will consider the engagement as definitive.’

‘Certainly, on my part.’

‘Can you call at our house this evening? My brother wishes to speak to you.’

‘I will call. At what time?’

‘Say half-past seven.’

He bowed, and seemed to think there was nothing further to be said, but Katharine had yet another word.

‘If, as I fully expect, you remain with us, you will want a lodging. Are you married?’

‘No. I shall certainly want lodgings.’

‘Crier was with some people in the village, a widow and her daughter, but he has left them, and I am sure that what he paid is a loss to them; so if you would, at any rate, look at their rooms before deciding, you would oblige me very much. Their name is Holden, and they live——’

‘Pardon me, but Holden is not exactly an *uncommon* name hereabouts.’

‘No. Well, Mrs. Holden is generally known as Betty o’ Robert’s, and they live in the main street of the village.’

‘Oh, then I shall find her, no doubt; and I will certainly go there, if possible.’

‘Thanks. I shall be glad if you will. At half-past seven, then, this evening.’

Gathering up her letters and drawing on her gloves, she went out of the office, and Earnshaw helped her to mount. With a word of thanks and a curt nod she rode off, and he stood within the great gates and watched her as she rode slowly out and down the lane. Nor was he the first man by many who may have done such a thing; it is nothing new to hold a passing conversation with a woman, and watch her as she rides away. She had passed far out of sight, and still he stood there, leaning against the gate-post in his shabby grey clothes, and

with his thin face turned towards the south, in which direction Katharine had disappeared.

Two boys, who were idling about the yard, stood looking at him.

‘Yon’s t’ felley as is after bein’ overlooker,’ said one.

‘Humph! I reckon it’s long sin’ he’s had his belly-full o’ victual. He looks welly clemmed, lad.’

The first boy assented cordially to the truth thus tersely put by his companion.

‘Ah, for sure he dun. Eh, measter’ (to Ughtred), ‘how mich meäl dost put to thi’ porridge of a mornin’? I reckon thou’rt used to ’em rayther thin.’

‘What’s that to you, so long as I don’t ask you to help me to eat it?’

With which ambiguous answer, he too passed out at the great gate, and down the lane towards the village.



CHAPTER VI.

'Dieu m'a inspiré d'être modeste et simple.'—CONSUELO.



ARNSHAW called that evening upon his prospective employer. Wilfrid scanned his would-be manager from head to foot, and compared him in his own mind with Crier, every lineament of whose face and form he knew as we never do know such things but when we thoroughly dislike them.

Mr. Healey found that the new candidate was tall, whereas Crier was barely of middle height. Ughtred's eyes, if not very brilliant, met his steadily, and with a calm open gaze ;

Crier's eyes were wont to rove to every corner of a room rather than meet those of the person who spoke to him, and they *rested* nowhere. Ughtred's voice, his accent, his turns of expression, were those of a man who, even if he uses a provincialism frequently, does it consciously, because it serves his purpose, not because he is acquainted with no other mode of expressing his thought. This too was in marked contrast with Crier.

As the interview proceeded, Wilfrid's every question was put with increasing politeness and less abruptness. Apart from Earnshaw's unlikeness to Crier, Wilfrid thought he discerned in the young man a character which in time might be as useful to him, perhaps, as Katharine was.

Ughtred, on his part, from some subtle, inexplicable reason, took far less pains to conceal the bent of his mind and desire from Wilfrid than from Katharine. He had felt instinctively repelled by the latter; he had

never seen anything like her before, and, almost without asking his own reason for his reticence, had quietly divested his face of any kind of expression. Why show one's mind to another mind that is an enigma to one, and an ugly-looking, uncourteous enigma too? But he read Wilfrid almost at a glance, and knew that perfect frankness, without discursiveness, and an utter absence of 'feelings,' would best suit him. He therefore told him simply enough that he had been out of regular work for nearly a year, and that if his present effort to get it failed, he would be very badly off—very hard-set. And then he told him how he had been dismissed his last place. Wilfrid, like Katharine, asked the reason, and Earnshaw's answer was again given in almost the same words; but this time a slight amused smile was added to the recital, and he said—

'And the head-man was very orthodox. I am not, and I offended him several times.

He was a capital man, though, and much valued by the principals.'

Wilfrid's brow darkened, yet he laughed, too, as he answered, 'I wish they had *my* orthodox manager!' He had rapidly gathered together all the inferences drawn from Earnshaw's manner, appearance, and words; had weighed them one against another, and had come to the conclusion (always with the man-like reservation that a cheat was possible behind the fairest exterior), that Earnshaw was to be trusted, and might be useful to him in his ever-increasing business as something higher than a mere overlooker. Of course no one is omniscient: the calm look, the simple and modest manner, without a trace of weakness or foolishness, might be the result of admirably developed imitative faculties; but Wilfrid was a daring man as well as one of keen insight. Earnshaw's manner might be nature pure and simple; and if so, he desired him for his servant. The experiment should be tried.

He told Ughtred he might consider himself engaged to him.

Ughtred demurred, and wished him to wait for the answer from his former employers.

‘I shall not consider you tied, sir, if you do not like the character they send.’

‘You may consider what you like. I shall keep to my part of the bargain.’

Not wishing to make any reply, Ughtred said good-night and went away.

Out in the air again, with the beams of the setting sun making a glory around him, he heaved a deep sigh, and a cloud seemed suddenly lifted from his face. The mantle of gravity that had covered it lightened a little. He could hardly be said to have attained a very splendid position in society—even in Hamerton society; but to him this engagement meant a good deal—it meant security, peace, comfort; at least he thought so, and believed that he saw his

future very clearly, whereby he did but prove

‘With what cracked pitchers go we to deep wells
In this world!’

Even the cracked pitchers of our own short-sightedness and self-conceit.

The boy who had conjectured that but a small portion of meal went to the making of Mr. Earnshaw’s morning porridge, had been, in a manner, correct in his guess. Ughtred Earnshaw had now lived for many months upon very short commons indeed. He was poor—sordidly, wretchedly poor; poor to the extent of thinking twice about spending sixpence on a meal if it were possible to make three-pence do. If he had chosen to turn himself into a weaver, spinner, or twister, he might have earned between twenty and thirty shillings a-week; but he had no intention of remaining in the position of weavers, spinners, and twisters. When Louis Kay’s short good-natured note had come, telling him of the chance there was, and saying

that he had spoken for him, but offering no great hopes of his success, he had resolved to try hard for the place, though hardly hoping he should get it. But he had succeeded; he walked out of Wilfrid Healey's house engaged, with a definite employment and definite payment for that employment in prospect. He felt very glad. His life had not looked so bright or seemed so desirable for a long time. His satisfaction lightened his grave face (it was a face lean to ugliness in some aspects), and lent some vivacity to his eyes: he walked down the village street feeling a new man, allowing new hopes, new thoughts, new fancies to press into his mind, where indeed there was plenty of space for them. But not to the exclusion of an errand he had to do. He bore in mind Katharine's words about 'Betty o' Robert's,' and that by taking that lady's lodgings he would 'oblige me very much.'

‘She did not look as if anything could oblige her very much, or cause her great pleasure,’ thought he, with some dissatisfaction, as he recalled Miss Healey’s sombre face and business-like mien. ‘But perhaps she has reasons enough for looking gloomy. That man, my master, is not altogether good to live with, I could fancy. Betty o’ Robert’s,—I wonder where she hangs out.’ He stopped, and accosted a man whom he met at the moment.

‘Can you tell me where Mrs. Holden lives —Betty o’ Roberts they call her?’

‘What’s your business with her?’

Ughtred now first looked at the man. He had a false, crafty look, and glanced distrustfully at the speaker.

‘My business concerns myself,’ said Ughtred, curtly; ‘and I will ask some one else who is less inquisitive.’

He walked on, and Mr. Crier stood looking after him, having decided, from a rapid

survey of his physiognomy, that he would not turn to look round.

More successful in his next demand, Ughtred before long presented himself at Mrs. Holden's door, and knocked thereat. It was opened by Sara, who looked at him in undisguised astonishment, and was far too 'taken aback' to ask him his business.

He was, however, fully capable of opening that business himself, and said—

'Does Mrs. Holden live here?'

'Ay, hoo dun.'

'She had a man of the name of—— Ah! I've forgotten his name; but she had a lodger, had not she?'

'Ay, hoo had, but he's gone off.'

'So I heard. I am the new overlooker at Healey; and I should be glad to know whether I can have lodgings here.'

'Yo'd better ask mother—step in, wilta?'

With which Sara opened the door rather wider to admit him; and Ughtred, going in,

found himself face to face with Mrs. Holden, who had been listening in the most open, ingenuous, and interested manner to his short parley with Sarah. He repeated his request.

‘Eh, I’st be glad eno’ to tak’ a lodger; but last one turned out a wastrel’ (good-for-nothing, scamp); ‘and how mun I know as you’re none another o’ t’ same sort?’

Ughtred, not at all offended, laughed; and his face changed wonderfully in the action. His smile, as is so often the case with one who rarely does smile, was beautifully sweet.

His amusement seemed to infect Mrs Holden, for she allowed a smile to develop itself slowly upon her own features, and presently said, in a consenting kind of voice—

‘Nay; I reckon thou’rt another mak’ fro’ *him*. Thou can have t’ rooms if thou’s a mind.’

The obvious reflection suggested by Mrs. Holden’s conduct is, that as a professional lodging-house keeper she would have been merely contemptible.

'The rooms' spoken of by her so magnificently, consisted of an extremely, small parlour and a bedroom above to match. Originally the parlour had been a kind of back-kitchen; and even now the stone floor, lurking cold and deceitful beneath the gorgeous drugget which covered it, was more solid than comfortable; and the wall, with its common paper of a pattern large enough for a good-sized hall; the meagre fire-place and small square window, with its four panes of thick glass richly adorned with green bull's-eyes—all these were of the meanest and most ordinary; but Ughtred Earnshaw, glancing round, said it looked very nice, and would suit him perfectly.

In lieu of a 'character,' he offered to pay Mrs. Holden a week's rent in advance; but this she declined, so giving another proof of her ignorance and want of regard for her own interests. She was neither a logician nor a woman of the world: a

sweet, winning smile, and a certain cadence in a human voice, had won her heart, and she trusted the owner of the smile and the voice—trusted him in theory and in practice.

All this time Sara had been standing in the background, whither she had retired with some sewing. Ughtred had hardly seemed to notice her, yet his quiet eyes had scanned her completely, and had informed him that she was, like 'Demeter's daughter, fresh and fair—a child of light, a radiant lass.'

Mrs. Holden intimated that the rooms were both ready, but Ughtred said he would go for a walk and take a look round the village before he took possession of them, and so, with a nod, went out.



CHAPTER VII.

'We ! what do we see? Each a space
Of some few yards before his face.'—CLOUGH.

TN the course of three weeks or so, Ughtred Earnshaw was fully established in his place at Healey ; and Abraham Crier, remaining in the village, had time enough and opportunity enough either to extend a magnanimous forgiveness to the rival who had supplanted him in more ways than one, or to show how a good Christian man can hate his enemy, or the person he chooses to consider his enemy.

Katharine Healey found her labours a good deal lightened. Her respect for Earn-

shaw gradually grew firmer and more assured. Things seemed to work smoothly and easily under his rule. There had been between them at first a little mutual, unspoken mistrust. Katharine had mistrusted the bow made her by Earnshaw, and the refinement of his speech, the absence of omitted or needless aspirates, the cultivation of his manner—in short, she had thought him too gentlemanly to be fitted for the decidedly workman-like post he had to fill. She was mistaken; and she soon and readily owned her mistake. The young man still made his bow, whenever he saw her, with not less grace than at first; but none the less did he turn out a thorough man of business.

He, for his part, had at first mistrusted her capacity for the tasks she undertook. He had put down her daily visit to the colliery and to the mill as a caprice—the caprice of a rich, and perhaps an eccentric woman, who had nothing to do, and who liked to amuse

herself and rather shock other young ladies by playing at being a business-woman. Of course he was soon undeceived, and then he mistrusted herself. He decided that she was hard and masculine. All his preconceived notions revolted against the idea of a woman giving her time to business; he drew, with unconscious severity, a line in his own mind between a lovable, womanly woman, and a true business-woman; and then he studied Katharine coldly, fastidiously, and disapprovingly, with a view to placing her on one side or the other of that line, quite unconscious that even before he began the study his mind was strongly biassed towards ranking her on the wrong, or what he considered the wrong side of it.

When he found that she was scarcely less shrewd and practical than any business-man with whom he had ever been acquainted, then he mentally put her on the left hand, deciding with the unconscious, unsparing intolerance

common with persons of very pure, high ideals and small experience, that she was not a noble, lovable woman ; she was talented, clear-headed, firm, and prompt ; she never worried you with irrelevancies and inconsistencies, but she was not feminine, not gracious, not ‘ what a woman ought to be.’

It did not take him long to arrive at this beautifully clear and unexceptional conclusion—sweeping and comprehensive condemnations are seldom the result of long study or wide experience—and he began to act upon it immediately. If wheels and springs and levers could feel, the main-spring of a good watch would no doubt receive honour and respect from the less essential parts of the machine ; such was the respect felt by Ughtred Earnshaw for Katharine Healey.

‘At home,’ as he had begun unconsciously to call his lodgings, was provided as vivid a contrast to Miss Healey as could well be imagined. Every day Ughtred’s wonder

increased at the fact that Sara Holden should claim kin with so intensely commonplace a person as Mrs. Holden. She was certainly wonderfully beautiful, and her calm, still manner made her also wonderfully attractive. Most likely, had she been a Lady Maud or Augusta, her portrait would have figured in Books of Beauty, and people would have said, 'How purely aristocratic is that face!—"the daughter of a hundred earls,"' and so on. As it was, she was Sara Holden—quiet; retiring, shy to a degree; and many of her fellow-factory lasses, who had cherry cheeks and big beady black eyes, were thought by the young men of their acquaintance to rejoice in a far more 'gradely' style of beauty than hers.

Ughtred had not been many days in the place before he heard the report that Ab o' Ben's had been courting Sara Holden: some said she had encouraged him, enticed by the superiority of his salary and position, and the advanced rate of his piety,

which last, as she was a 'very good lass,' had overcome the objection of his belonging to such a body as the 'Primitives,' for the Primitives in Hamerton included none who could by the most charitable construction be called the *élite*. Others declared that 'hoo'd ha' nowt to say to him,' and wondered how high she did mean to look; she who never earned more than eighteen shillings a-week, and who could never manage more than one half-timer at once; and generally lost by that one, said the more malicious. She refuse Ab o' Ben's, so well known a Local! Her ideas must indeed be soaring if they had to stoop to the prospect of marriage with the overlooker of the largest colliery anywhere near, with a salary of —. Reports here always became contradictory and somewhat vague. Ughtred, when he ever gave a thought to the matter (and that was only now and then, when his attention happened to be drawn to

Sara's presence), preferred to think that she would 'ha' nowt to say to' Crier, whom he now knew well enough by sight. Sara was simple and countrified enough; perhaps her fair face and lustrous eyes hid no very great thoughts or burning poetic ideas, but—though it was no business of his, he told himself, whom she cared for. 'All I have to do is to be civil and friendly with her,' decided Ughtred, after giving an hour one evening to the consideration of the subject.

Accordingly, in his daily meetings with Sara, he often made some little friendly overtures to her, wished her a cordial good-day, made some remark about the weather, asked her if she frequented the Sunday-school, if she liked her daily work. But all his harmless, kindly advances were repulsed. If ever he seemed disposed to linger an instant in the kitchen as he passed through it to his own quarters, if ever he displayed the slightest inclination

to detain her in his presence, or to remain a few minutes in hers, she showed such an evident disinclination for his conversation and company that he could not, with any courtesy, persist in the well-meant effort. This reserve and distaste for him and his society roused his curiosity slightly, and not unpleasantly, not for long at a time. Still, by fits and starts, when he had time as he sat at his meals, or when he had read in the evening till he was tired, or when he took a long ramble over the moors, and even then only in the intervals of looking for plants, insects, or birds, he would think and wonder a little as to the cause of Sara Holden's 'odd' behaviour to him. It half piqued, half pleased him; if she had been a loud-voiced, laughing, forward young woman, 'hearty,' like most of her companions, he would have thought of her as seldom as possible, and then only with a view to avoiding her.

So, quite unable to account for her discourtesy towards him, he still continued to make overtures of peace to Sara, with disheartening want of success. She answered him in monosyllables, and he had heard her say on one occasion that she 'couldn't abide overlookers and that mak'.'

With Mrs. Holden he was on excellent terms. She called him 'Yon lad o' mine,' and took a maternal interest in him. She expressed her astonishment at the 'seet o' books' that he possessed — nearly every volume of which small library represented something, required or not, done without, in order that it might be purchased.

'Ab o' Ben's,' Mrs. Holden affirmed, 'had nowt nobbut a Bible and a *Commentary*, and one or two others about th' fulfilment o' prophecy and salvation by faith as he used to read afore he prayched.'

'Is he preaching yet?' asked Ughtred.

'Ay, for sure is he. As brazen as owt,

and always were! He'n bin here and theer and everywhere; but not so mich i' Hamerton as he used to, dosta see? He were fain to give 'em a coorse about th' evil doings o' them as is set i' high places. I reckon them was meant for his master as were, Wilfrid. And it's true he're a vary bad 'un, a reg'lar wastrel.'

'None so mich worse nor Ab o' Ben's hissel,' said Sara, to the great amazement of Ughtred, who had never before known her condescend to put in a word on any of these topics.

'Then you don't take Crier's part?' said he.

'Nay, not I. He cheated them as would ha' stinted him i' nowt if so be he'd bin' in trouble. That's what I call *mean*,' said Sara, with concentrated contempt; and forthwith she tied her bonnet-strings with rapidity and went out.

Mr. Crier was, in fact, at a loose end. He

did not find it easy to get a new place—men to whom he applied, and who knew his story, were aware that Wilfrid Healey's sins did not include that of illiberality to his employes, and they allowed worldly considerations to prevail in their minds to the detriment of the cause of an injured innocent with a fox-like countenance and crafty smile. To them he was simply a discovered cheat—a detected thief; they would have nothing to do with him; which meant, of course, that they themselves and their subordinates were more fortunate in the matter of morals than Mr. Healey and his ex-overlooker.

But to himself Crier was a torment, a scorching atom of misery and defeat; whose vivid, corroding sufferings only served to eat out his own heart. It is most awfully true that 'the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy.' His nature was one of those which may be mean, poor, and little in nearly

every aspect, but which in some one thing are sublime. No one but Abraham Crier knew what Abraham Crier lost when he fell.

Crier's hatred to him whom he considered the cause of his woe, did not exist without producing hatred's usual offspring, enmity: but so far the enmity had not been active; it had evaporated in dark sayings about the wrath of God and the doom of the open sinner; which sayings regaled the ears of the faction which yet stood up for him—a not inconsiderable body, consisting chiefly of factory hands of his own religious persuasion, who believed his to be a genuine case of persecution by the rich and sinful.

Wilfrid was perfectly well aware of the dark sayings and of the faction that was raised against him, and he rejoiced, in his defiant, insolent way, in his own unpopularity. The hatred of such 'scum' as Mr. Crier and his friends, appeared rather to exhilarate him

than otherwise ; and when some one warned him to beware of that man, Crier, who was as treacherous as a Red Indian, he laughed a little scornful laugh, and inwardly wondered what such as Crier could do to *him*.





CHAPTER VIII.

'My spirit hung
O'er awful gulfs ; and loathly dread
So bitter was, I wished me dead.'

My Beautiful Lady. -

QN some Sunday evenings in June and July, Hamerton was wont to look very beautiful. There had been time for the last of the week's smoke to clear away ; and the sun was permitted to shine with what ardour he would.

It was on one of these perfect Sunday evenings that Ughtred Earnshaw, ungrateful fellow ! sat in his parlour reading. I say ungrateful, because on that evening every air, every ray of light, wooed one to come out of doors, and he was not usually regard-

less of such a summons. From his open window he could see the ridged moors rising richly brown and soft against the pale opaque blue. The stillness of the evening was exquisite. Now and then a footstep paced by on the flags, and a form passed the window, making some little difference in the light. It was decidedly dusk indoors; even outside it had begun to be less broadly clear and daylight. Ughtred that morning had taken a long walk: he had been reading all afternoon, and, after an interruption of tea, all evening also. Any one passing might have seen his bent head and pale attentive face leaning over his book.

Once or twice, indeed, within the last hour, his attention had strayed from his book, and he had looked up and out with a sensation that upon such an evening it was wrong to be indoors, but some feeling of laziness or disinclination left him each time where he was. At last, with an effort, he clapped to

the book, laid it upon the table, and rose, looking at his watch as he did so. He looked too tall for that little and low room. In his aspect there was a good deal that was powerful and commanding; not obtrusively so—you felt it the more from its quietness and utter absence of assertion. No one, though, would have mistaken him for anything but a working man at the first glance. Look again into these dark, quiet eyes, and at the resolute yet gentle mouth and chin, and you saw something more;—a strong nature, all the stronger from its moderation and calmness; a will before which you bowed, but bowed willingly and cheerfully.

Now, as he stood irresolute for a moment, there was apparent a great difference between this Ughtred Earnshaw and the one who had come to Healey a month ago. That man had looked, despite the brave face he put on, sad, worn, poverty-stricken; this man had no very great elation or buoyancy in his

aspect, but the air of a man who has work to do, which work he can and does do well—which he enjoys doing well; and such a man cannot be an altogether unpleasant object.

‘Quarter-past nine,’ he murmured; ‘I’ll ask whether I have time for a stroll before supper.’

He went into the kitchen. Mrs. Holden stood at the window, gazing earnestly out. The table was spread for three, for Ughtred always supped with his landlady and her daughter.

‘Eh, lad, is yon you?’ said the woman. ‘I dare say yo’re fair clemmed for want o’ yer supper. But yon lass has ne’er come in fro’ her walk, and I canna’ think where hoo is.’

‘Did she go out alone?’

‘Nay, hoo went wi’ two o’ her lake-lasses (companions) for a walk oop th’ wood yonder—Brierley Clough, thou known, and hoo’s niver bin so late afore. For’t life o’ me, I canna’ think what hoo can be doin’.’

‘Oh, I don’t think you need be uneasy; but if you’ll tell me which way they were coming back, I’ll go and meet them, and bring Sara home.’

‘Eh! I wish thou would. They said as they’d go oop th’ Clough, and back round Healey’s factory.’

‘Oh, I know the way. I’ll go, Mrs Holden, don’t be afraid.’

He went out, walked quickly down the street and towards the wood, which lay but a short distance out of the village.

Sara and her two companions had taken their walk, the latter chatting merrily enough. Sara herself had seemed somewhat silent and reserved. Her friends had left her on arriving at ‘Healey’s mill,’ as their way and hers there parted. Sara stepped on in the direction of home, and presently entered a long, dark passage, known as ‘th’ Mill Walk,’ because it was in reality a narrow slice of

the yard of Healey Mill, with a high wall at either side, and a turnstile at each end. Sara hurried along, sighing a little, and looking nervously to this side and that; for she was full of fears—as fearful, poor child, as she was ignorant and innocent. It was nearly dark, and she had gone about half-way through the alley, when from the shadow of the wall a man started forth and spoke to her, calling her by name. It was Crier, and Sara shrank away from him in fear and distrust.

‘Well, Sara,’ said he, in a voice that trembled with the effort he made to make it gentle and unexcited. ‘What is the matter? Why do you look at me as if you were frightened?’

‘I can find my way home by myself, thank yo’,’ said Sara, trying a conciliatory measure, ‘so good-neet to you.’

‘Oh, you shall go home by-and-by; only you must talk to me for a few minutes first.’

She trembled and turned pale; but her

fear was not desperate—she was not brought to bay, so she stood still.

Crier heaved a deep breath. He had words at his command—burning words; but he feared they might offend and frighten her, so he schooled his tongue, and spoke as gently and moderately as he could.

‘I’ve never seen you to speak to, Sara, since I left your mother’s house,’ he began, ‘and I want to know how that agrees with your promises to me.’

Sara was silent and confused for a short time, and then made answer, ‘Why, what dost mean? What promises?’

‘You know very well what promise I mean, Sara. You promised you would think of me, and of what I said to you. You said you thought you could care for me—some time.’

Sara looked appealingly at him. What he said was true. She had given him such a promise; she had said such words to him;

at the time she had meant them, but that was months ago, when things were so different!

His face softened as he looked at her, and wondered whether things would not even yet come all right. There was a smile of ineffable tenderness in the man's eyes and upon his lips, as he went on, touching her sleeve gently—

‘It *was* a promise, Sara; and how are you acting up to it?’

A pause, and then he went on in a changed and quicker voice—

‘Oh, if you knew what you are to me! Too much, far too much! I love you too much! Those were happy days when I saw you every day, long ago; when you were not as you are now—Sara!’

The last word was almost a prayer.

‘Oh, be quiet! Don’t! It’s—it’s all done—it mustn’t go on no longer now,’ cried Sara, with such excessive pain and terror as seemed exaggerated, even to Crier.

As she spoke, she thrust out her hands, turned aside her head, and looked with wide, staring eyes at the narrow walls whence she could not escape.

Crier's wits were sharpened by love, by hope, by despair. Why did she look round but to seek some help? Why did she thrust forward her hands in that appealing way if she did not dream of other hands that might touch hers, and draw her away from him? The very idea was torture. He exclaimed in a deep, hoarse voice—

‘Sara Holden, if thou's been playing me false, thou shalt rue it—thou and *him too*! I'll do him a mischief—I will, I *will*!’

Every trace of colour fled from her face. Her lips trembled, but she did not speak. She clasped her hands and looked at him.

‘I know him,’ he went on, savagely. ‘It's yon damned young puppy as has crept into my place. It's yon Earnshaw, it is, eh?’

‘No, nor any other,’ replied Sara, sum-

moning all her resolution to stare him in the face as she spoke.

He looked at her for a moment or two, and who shall say which of them suffered most cruelly — he in doubting, or she in desperately trying to cheat him?

‘It’s a lie as you’re telling me!’ he exclaimed at last, striking his hands together, and looking for the moment transformed by his love and passion. Yet his passion was selfish, and brought with it tortures, not calm.

Sara was a timid creature, but would turn to bay when sufficiently provoked. She turned to him with blazing eyes, and said—

‘And I could like to know what *you* are, to be talkin’ about lies to me or any one else. There’s no worse liar nor yersel’ i’ Hamerton. Yo’ cheated your master and stole from him, and then yo’ talk to me about *lies*. Fur sure!” She finished with a laugh, half-scornful, half-hysteric.

Like lightning, a great rage against Wilfrid Healey filled the man's heart. Wilfrid had sinned, and did sin so much, was sinning every day, and gloried in having neither religion nor moral law ; and yet he was not punished : he was rich and prosperous : if he had chosen to ask a woman to be his wife, no doubt she would have consented, had she been the most beautiful and virtuous of her sex. He, Crier, had done so little that was wrong, and had so often resolved to give up even that little. The sin had been so small ; the punishment was so huge. To lose Sara Holden was more than forfeiting heaven in the next life : it was death in this. If he had only had a little more time, surely, surely she would have been won ! But now—some Power seemed to open his eyes very clearly, and to show his

'Shrinking soul that deep abyss
Of days to come all bare of bliss.'

It was not fair. He hated Wilfrid then,

as he had never before conceived himself capable of hating anyone or anything.

‘There’s no sin in cheating the devil,’ he said with a voice of concentrated fury; ‘and Wilfrid Healey is one, or there never was a devil at all.’ Then, after a pause, he almost panted, ‘I’ll do him a mischief some of these days.’

Sara covered her face with her hands, faintly shuddering. A horrible fascination bound her to the spot. She could not get away. It was becoming too awful. Would some one never come by and deliver her from this man, whose face, white and convulsed with rage and jealousy, stayed before her eyes, and fixed its own upon her even when she covered her face?

She could not cry, she could not speak, she could not move; she could only stand there with every nerve on edge, revolted in anticipation by the tones of that hated voice.

At last he spoke again. He had calmed down a little, or had forced an appearance of calmness into his voice and manner.

'Listen, Sara! As long as I live I shall try to make you love me. I will die, and you shall die before I give you up; I'll never *think* of giving you up while I breathe. And you will love me in the end; such love as mine will *make* you love me. Oh, my dear!' (his broken voice giving the lie to his confident words), 'if you lived to be a thousand years old, no one would ever love you again as I do—and for why? he *could* not. Will you never try to return it?'

He stretched out his arms towards her, and all his soul was in his face. But she neither looked at him nor answered him; her endurance had reached its utmost limits. Even his delirium of pleading was struck into something more like moderation by her look. *She did not hear him.* That idea fell

upon his mood like ice on a naked nerve. She was listening; directly afterwards the turnstile at the end of the alley turned, and Ughtred Earnshaw's tall form darkened the dim light in the entrance. Sara gave one low shriek, and almost one leap towards him, and 'Take me away; take me home! she gasped, clinging to his arm with both hands. Ughtred, having just come into darkness from the clearer light outside, scarcely *saw* the form that had sprung towards him, but the voice he knew, almost choked though it was, and he dimly discerned another figure at a little distance.

'Who's *that* fellow?' he asked, incisively.

'Come away! For Lord's sake, come away!' was all the reply he got from Sara, who seemed to him beside herself with fright. 'I'll tell thee all about yon chap when we'n gotten safe whoam,' she added, tremulously; and he was fain to turn with her.

It was getting very dusky now, yet it was lighter out there in the open air than in that narrow alley ; and Ughtred looked quickly at Sara, and then, with an expression of horrified surprise, stopped short.

‘Sara! what *has* happened? What is the matter?’

For the first time Sara looked at her deliverer.

‘Eh, it’s you,’ she said, as if she had not recognised him before.

‘Before we get into the village,’ said he, considerably, ‘I think we had better rest and wait until you are a little more composed. You look so nervous and agitated that people might notice it.’

‘Dun I?’ she asked, utterly unconscious that her death-white face, distended eyes, and parted lips, made her look like one out of her senses.

But she consented to pause a few minutes, and at last said she had a veil to her bonnet, which she would put down.

With fingers still trembling she let it down, and then said she thought they had better be going on.

‘Will not you tell me who that man was?’ asked Ughtred, when they had gone about half-way home.

‘It were Ab o’ Ben’s,’ she answered, almost in a whisper.

‘And he had been threatening you?’

‘Nay, not azackly—— He’re a vary bad man, for sure,’ she concluded.

‘But, Sara, you had much better tell me about it. You ought to be protected from him if he annoys you.’

‘Nay, I canna tell—not now,’ persisted Sara, appearing so much distressed that he judged it better to press her no further.

On arriving at the house, Mrs. Holden testified such excessive alarm at her daughter’s appearance, that Ughtred decided to leave them alone, and accordingly went to his own room, saying he did not want any supper.

If Sara told her mother all about the adventure, why, so much the better.

He sat down and resumed his book, but in spite of trying to concentrate his mind upon the work—an excellent one by the late John Stuart Mill—he could not help hearing sounds suspiciously like sobs from the kitchen, and concluded that Sara was confiding in her mother.

He had never been more mistaken in his life.

Two or three days passed, during which neither Sara nor her mother made the least allusion to what had passed, so he, too, preserved a discreet silence. On Wednesday, however, Sara opened her lips and spoke. It was in the evening; Mrs. Holden had gone out to the village, and Ughtred was in his room writing. A very small, timid knock at the door roused him. To his 'Come in!' appeared, in answer, Sara herself, the picture of embarrassment.

'This, certainly, is the very strangest girl I ever saw,' he reflected; while he said, 'Can I do anything for you, Sara?'

'I've made so bold as to coom and ax your *advice*,' began Sara; and from the manner in which she spoke, he conjectured rightly that that speech had been specially composed as a graceful opening or preamble to what was to follow. He put down his pen, smiled encouragingly, and said—

'I am sure I shall be glad to advise you in any way that I can, but won't you sit down?'

'Nay, thanks. It were about yon chap Crier. Yo' wanted me to tell yo' why I were so ill fleyed o' Sunday neet.'

He nodded.

'I were fleyed at a good many things, but it were one word 'at he said more nor all t' others put together. Yo' known he were sent away fro' Healey?'

'Yes.'

'And he's bin fair mad against t' master

ever sin'. Well, o' Sunday neet I'd bin tellin' him a bit o' my mind. He'd said I'd tow'd him a lie, and I said who were he to talk about lies—him as cheated and steal't. And wi' that he ups into such a passion, and swore as he'd do the master a mischief. And he means it; he'll go to his purpose, he will. I've kept it back these three days, but I could na' no longer. For suppose if he did aught to t' master, and me knowin' all along o' what he'd said. Eh, dear! what *mun* I do? I'm fair puzzl't.'

'Oh, don't be afraid,' said her counsellor, very cheerfully. 'He won't touch Mr. Healey; he only said that to frighten you. And what could he do to harm him even if he tried?'

With a mysterious awe-struck look around, she bent forward, and said—

'He might —— kill him, you know.'

Was it that earnest, beautiful face leaning towards him with a look of such terrified conviction? was it a momentary chill, or an

instant's yielding to superstition, that unnerved him for a moment? At any rate, he shivered as we shiver when some one 'walks over our grave.' Then, starting up, he said quickly—

'Pooh, you must not give way to such ridiculous ideas. Absurd! But if you really feel uneasy, I will just have an eye to Crier. My own opinion is, that after his unfavourable interview on Sunday evening he will leave Hamerton altogether. I wonder he has not done so before.'

'Eh, if he nobbut would!' cried Sara, clasping her hands and speaking fervently, but as if such a prospect were too good ever to be true. 'If he nobbut would, my heart 'ud be at rest.'

These words were naturally an enigma to Ughtred. He looked at the girl, and wondered if she really were *quite* right in her head. She then quietly thanked him, wished him good-night, and went away.

He sat still for a time, thinking over her words, and, more than her words, her manner. It seemed to him that in her dislike and fear of this man Crier there was something curiously exaggerated, something almost grotesque. What was it relating to him that called from her such agony of fear, such pallid cheeks, and such dilated eyes? and that wrung from her such wildly fantastic ideas as to what he might do, if provoked? She had gone to the utmost length, and had imagined Crier a murderer—as if, in these days, people committed murder for being dismissed from a situation! thought Ughtred.

‘He might —— kill him, you know,’ she had said, in such tones as to make it mean really, ‘I believe he will try to kill him.’ What had the man done—what did she know of him—what hold had he upon her, that she should think and say such things of him?

‘An ignorant girl’s untutored fancies. She imagines every knave to be a black villain, and makes a murder out of every threat.’ That, he decided, must be the case. Crier could scowl unpleasantly, no doubt—Ughtred had been treated to a black look from him now and then—but what earthly good could he do himself or his cause by assaulting Wilfrid Healey? Time, he was sure, would prove Sara’s alarm unfounded.





CHAPTER IX.

‘Cut, but tear too.

Foiled oft, starved long, glut malice for amends.’—BROWNING.



ON the following day, in the afternoon, Wilfrid Healey rode up the lane to the colliery quite unconscious of the ‘ponderous roll of circumstance’ which was collecting about his feet and directing their steps. Circumstance is quiet and merciless in her doings. She does not presume to dictate; not she! She only shows us various paths, some with one obstacle in the way, some with another; one with none, or but a small one. And we, who like our ease and what gives us

least trouble, do but glance at the barred ways; and without, perhaps, thinking much about whether those barriers might be demolished, we step along the 'way that opens,' and find what circumstance was preparing for us at the end thereof.

Therefore let me be content to state that Wilfrid Healey, in a very bad temper, rode up the lane that June afternoon. As he rode, he muttered sounds like curses upon the uneven state of the road. He was angry at having to come up to Healey. He had only done it because Katharine had mentioned, in a neutral kind of way, that it was fully a month since he had been there; and she had, too, looked so pale and weary that he had made up his mind to let her off for once. Perhaps, if she overwrought herself, she might have an illness, which would be highly inconvenient to him just then. Moreover, to have slaves is well—to keep them in good temper is better.

He rode in at the great gates, and looked round the yard. Some carts were waiting at one of the pits, and the carters were clustered together near by. They looked up, and there was some little stir among them when they saw who came riding in. Every one knew him; some rather liked him; none loved him. These men knew that he could do them no harm. They were not in his service, so it was without fear that they looked upon his sullen frown and louring face.

Wilfrid, however, had no eyes for them. His glance suddenly fell upon another figure, that of Mr. Crier, who stood talking to a boy just within the yard. He started perceptibly on seeing Wilfrid, and had there been no witnesses, would probably have sneaked away. But there were too many people round about; he could not consistently do that: the righteous and ill-used is proverbially bold and undaunted in the face of the most frightful dangers.

Crier remained where he was, with an awkward endeavour to look easy and self-possessed. He hated Wilfrid, but when he saw him he feared him too; and he envied him with a kind of far-off bitter anger at the difference between them.

Wilfrid was pleased at his discomfiture, and after bestowing a single cool contemptuous stare upon him, rode slowly by, without even acknowledging him, to the dingy little office. He did not dismount, but conversed at the door with Earnshaw for some little time. Then the two went out of the yard, in the other direction, in earnest conversation.

It had been wise on Mr. Crier's part had he left the yard at once. But concluding from Wilfrid's silence and quietness that he would not notice him at all, he thought to improve the occasion, and show the strength of his innocence and the truth of his cause by remaining where he was; which he did, leaning nonchalantly against the wall, his hands

in his pockets, as if he would give his former master the impression that in leaving his service he had lost nothing.

In the course of a quarter of an hour Wilfrid and Earnshaw returned. Ughtred turned in at the office door with the words—

‘Good afternoon, sir; I’ll see about what you ordered;’ and Wilfrid, nodding, came on. His temper had been ruffled a little further by something ‘contrary’ at the pit. He cast his eyes towards the place where Crier was standing—not that he expected to see him again, but with the instinct that always prompts us to look a second time at the spot where we have seen or heard something disagreeable.

The something disagreeable was there, flourishing and life-size as ever. Perhaps some association, unpleasant or vexatious, was connected, in Wilfrid Healey’s mind, with Crier, beyond the mere fact that he had been cheated by that worthy. At any rate,

the sight of his ex-manager standing there seemed to irritate the master beyond endurance; he reined up, and asked, with a certain imperious protrusion of the under-lip, that Crier knew well—

‘What the devil are *you* doing here?’

‘Minding my own business; and I’ll thank you to mind yours,’ retorted the other, who could be terse under certain circumstances.

‘Your business is not on my premises,’ said Wilfrid, a certain evil pleasure lending disdainful coolness to his scornful voice. ‘I’ll not have you here. I want no whining, canting hypocrites about me—fellows that are praying, praying, and psalm-singing the whole year round, to throw you off your guard while they pick your pockets. Earnshaw!’

Ughtred appeared

‘Turn this blackguard out; and if ever he comes sneaking round the place again, kick him out of it, do you hear? I’ll have no such vermin where I’m master.’

'You'd better go, man,' said Earnshaw, civilly enough to Crier, who at that raised his eyes, and looked first at Ughtred and then at Wilfrid; then turned and walked off without a word.

But Ughtred, after meeting that look, and seeing the one directed to his master, no longer marvelled at Sara Holden's exquisite terror of Crier. Her lover! No wonder she said her heart would be at rest only if he were out of the place. How could she rest at all, knowing he loved her?

Wilfrid after a few minutes rode away.

Ughtred, in the dingy office again, reflected upon the short scene, and remembered that if Crier's hate had been fearfully visible in his face, there was perhaps some excuse for it; for Wilfrid's words, manner, and tone had been the quintessence of contempt and insolence: he looked as one might look who spurns a reptile, at once despised and detested.

‘If he had spoken so to me, and looked so at me,’ thought Ughtred, with a shade of pensiveness on his brow, ‘I should have choked him,’

Earnshaw judged it wiser to say nothing to Sara about the dispute which had taken place up at Healey. To have told her would have led her at once to think that all her former fears were well founded, and that Crier would not stop short of murder in his present mood.

Since her communication to Ughtred of what had alarmed her, she had seemed calm and reassured, and had recovered her usual still, even manner, one that appeared to indicate a quiet, rather phlegmatic disposition, not easily moved, either to vivid hope, deep despair, or indeed to profound emotion of any kind.

In relation to Ughtred himself, she had resumed her former manner, but with a

difference. She never addressed him unless she was obliged, and made monosyllables, as far as possible, express her answers to his questions. He now decided that neither shyness nor timidity caused her manner to him. Time after time he had tried to believe that the reason, and time after time he had said he was wrong. She neither blushed, trembled, nor faltered before him: now and then, if he looked up suddenly, he would find her eyes fixed earnestly upon his face; she always withdrew them at such moments, but without any appearance of bashfulness or confusion—that was as far from her expression as boldness or impertinence.

He was forced to assign another and a far less flattering reason for her behaviour—she did not wish to have anything to do with him; she disliked him, and was anxious to avoid, and as far as possible to ignore, him. He was surprised to find how much time he devoted to the topic. ‘As if it could

matter to me! What possible influence can she have over any single action of mine?’

Yet, obstinately as ever, the subject obtruded itself; and many a time in the evening, in the quiet, he, sitting with his book open, saw no printed page, but the lovely face of Sara Holden, with its clear, pure outlines and limpid brown eyes. Those eyes fixed themselves seriously and steadily upon him, and he could not avoid them.

He was angry with himself about it—annoyed, perturbed, sometimes even ill-tempered; wondering what could be the reason of his infatuation, and for all his strong head and calm reasonable nature, was too simple to see that Sara Holden was the first very pretty and interesting young woman with whom he had ever been brought into any degree of intimacy; and she, and the little mystery which he fancied dwelt around her, were things so new, so unprecedented—to him—that they engrossed a large amount of

his spare thoughts and conjectures, even against his will.

Ughtred had never had time either to theorize about women, or to observe them. From his boyhood his had been a busy, practical, hard-working life. Toil in the day, and hard, difficult study at night—that had been his life; it had strengthened his will and his intellect; he knew a great deal about the human understanding, had read much philosophy, and was acquainted with the newest lights in the matter of Evolution, natural and social. He had decided political opinions, the reasons for which he could give; he had decided opinions too upon the model woman, the reasons for which he could not give, but could only say vaguely that all women ‘ought’ to be noble, pure, and true; and that all men ‘ought’ to be the same, and generous, tender, and long-suffering as well. He had not been in the world; he did not fear to dissect a creed, or satirize a

venerable and respectable superstition ; but he would have shrunk in disgust and wonder from the flippant cynicism spoken of women by men who have mothers and sisters, and in some cases wives, perhaps because he had none of these appendages himself. He took the subject earnestly, which was perhaps very *niais* on his part, and had no idea of saying smart, half-true, half-false things, and making mistaken inductions about women, to pass the time.

He was slowly getting interested in Sara, with an interest which, situated as they both were (he blindly ignorant of the spring of all her inconsistencies and strange ways), would have been fatal to him. 'A fortuitous concourse of events,' however, intervened—one evening's adventure banished Sara's troublesome fair face for ever from before his heart and mind.

In his new occupation—that of gravely and earnestly trying to find 'reasons' for a girl's

fits of changefulness—he forgot to think about Mr. Crier, and was only recalled to a consciousness of that gentleman's existence by a sudden, startling shock.

One evening, in the early part of July, he had, with a determined effort, ceased to occupy his mind with Sara, and had succeeded in giving his attention to a book, which he had been reading for several hours. He had no idea of how the time had passed until the church clock clanged out midnight in the stillness. He put his book down, turned out the gas, and ran upstairs to his bedroom. No light was there, save that of the moon: the small window was open, letting in a delicious freshness. Despite the lateness of the hour, Ughtred rested his elbows on the window-sill, and leaned out, looking on the night. The moors in the distance slept mysteriously in the grey light. So clear and so distinct was it all, that he could see the great boulders, called 'Robin Hood's Bed,' on Black-

rigg, clearly defined against the sky. Nearer rose a wooded 'brow,' the Brierley Clough, where Sara and her companions had walked on that well-remembered Sunday evening. The great mills were silent, and their tall chimneys rose almost gracefully athwart the sky. The street below was in absolute repose; he could see the road leading up-hill to the station, and the sheds and trucks stand-about. Contrasting with the silver flood was a red light at the station, and further up the line, near the entrance of the long tunnel, a green one. He had had in his life little time to meditate upon picturesque scenes and æsthetic effects; but that kind of study is best left to those whose feelings on such subjects require cultivating and titillating into enthusiasm. The soul of the scene sank into his soul with all its beautiful message of peace and hope, and its irresistible whisper of joy possible in the future. He did not look at it and admire; he received

it into his heart of hearts, 'and was still.' But did the loveliest July midnight in the world ever turn a sinful man away from his purpose? The night might be still, beautiful, and majestic; poets might look upon her, and make verses about her; artists might longingly behold the moonlight, and wish they could dip their brushes into its cool brilliance, and reproduce it on their canvas. Mad people might cool their fevered brains somewhat therein, and hard-worked men, like Ughtred Earnshaw, might derive feelings of delight and repose from its contemplation; but people preoccupied with envy, hatred, malice, and other human attributes, would have but little time for moon-gazing.

Ughtred, rejoicing in the hush and stillness, suddenly knew that stillness to be no longer perfect. A footstep broke the spell. It came quickly, perseveringly, stealthily,

' Like sin,
Which steals back softly on a soul half-saved.'

Somewhat wondering who, not intoxicated, could be coming at that hour, Ughtred waited and watched till the person who owned the footstep should come into view.

When he did, Ughtred saw a man, who walked in the shade of the wall with head bent down and slouching gait. As he passed the Holden's door, however, he raised his face and looked up to the window of the room in which Sara and her mother slept. What a face! Ughtred had drawn back, but he saw it distinctly, white, set, yet sneering, with the mark of some desperate purpose upon it—Abraham Crier's face. It was a shock, after turning from the serene stillness of the night, to meet that evil face—

‘As if, in turning from the Cross,
With trust to keep the sight and save my soul,
I had stumbled, first thing, on the serpent's head,
Coiled with a leer at foot of it.’

Crier passed on up the village, and Ughtred drew breath again. He was puzzled. At that time of night, alone and unassisted,

what could the man be going to do? What business was it of his? he asked himself, and fell to wondering whether such a face as that were not the business of any one.

‘What if I were to follow him?’ was his thought one moment; and the next, ‘Pooh! to find him quietly walking into his own dwelling.’ But here something reminded him that Crier was walking from, not towards, his home. Ughtred was uneasy and unsettled. The beauty of the night had faded and fled: he might court sleep, but he knew she would persistently deny herself.

So debating within himself, he let five or ten minutes slip by, when again the silence was broken, this time with the sharp staccato of a horse’s hoofs on the stones.

Ughtred sprang from his seat, and looked out as the rider passed. It was not easy to mistake him, proud and overbearing as he always was and looked. Ughtred instantly

recognized Wilfrid Healey, riding in the direction of his own house.

Then he lost no more time in debating, but went softly downstairs into the kitchen, and opened the door, which, after the usual manner at Hamerton, was simply locked. He took the key, locked the door on the outside, pocketed the key, and stood on the flags in the balmy July air, with the nearly full moon, like—

‘The badge

Of some sublime, inherited despair,’

hanging in mellow light above him, ere yet the echo of the horse’s hoofs had become silent in the distance. He set off at a round pace, in a state of intense and highly-wrought excitement, for the truth was easy enough for him to see now. Crier, knowing Wilfrid Healey’s habits, had made it his business to find out where he had been that evening, and meditated receiving him somewhere on the road as he should be riding home. No doubt Mr. Crier calculated on the inebriation of his late

master. (Drunk or sober, Wilfrid rode steady and straight as a die.) Ughtred, however, did not give himself time to think of details or probable incidents. That would not do. A longing, which made him pant and strain every nerve to accomplish his purpose, sent him to his master's help; not that he felt much love for him, but—suppose he were senseless and helpless. Ughtred thought of the probable brutality of Crier, and hurried on, biting his lip. Wilfrid was not riding very swiftly, and at last Ughtred caught sight of him. Then hurrying after him, he saw that he rode straight on, and that the gates of his own drive were close at hand, when a man stepped swiftly forth and put out his left hand to seize the reins. In his right hand was the gleam of steel, and that hand was upraised with the intent to strike.

Wilfrid reeled a little in his saddle. Ughtred made two bounds to the spot, and stayed the uplifted arm.

The two footmen had pale, set faces and gleaming eyes. Crier's expression, thought Ughtred, was hideous—

‘A frightful face,
Judas made monstrous by much solitude.’

Wilfrid, as it happened, was quite capable this time of managing his own affairs. He was returning from the Kays', and was perfectly sober. Crier's sudden onslaught had terrified the horse and somewhat startled the rider, that was all. For an instant he was off his guard, no more. Almost before Ughtred came up he was his insolent, defiant, dauntless self again. Crier, when he found his arm grasped and his hand stayed, uttered a dreadful sound—a low cry of mingled rage, hate, and fear—the cry of an animal baffled of its revenge.

‘You scoundrel!’ uttered Earnshaw, ‘drop that, unless you want your brains knocked out.’

He had not calculated upon the resources

of Mr. Crier's powerful mind. Before he knew how it had happened, he felt something like a fiery sting penetrate the flesh of his left arm ; and as, in his surprise and pain, he withdrew it, Mr. Crier, with his free hand, gave his adversary a smart slap in the face, thus gratifying his own delicate feelings and astonishing his opponent beyond measure. Then, with one wriggle and one twist, he was gone—out into the cold with that chill companion, Failure, and the horrible sense of having been in a kind of hell upon earth for weeks while he made up his mind to his deed, and all to no purpose, but defeat.

'It was as he had seen time die,
And good turn evil 'neath his eyes,
And God live to forge miseries
For him alone, for him alone,
For all the world beside seemed gone.'

'The deuce!' observed Mr. Healey, with a short laugh. 'I say, Earnshaw! Why man, what's up?'

'He gave me a prick with that confounded

blade of his,' said the other, biting his lips till they bled, between rage and pain.

'The deuce he did! Can you walk to the house? I'll get you some brandy.'

Ughtred followed Wilfrid down the drive, and happening to touch his left sleeve, found his hand wet and red. Feeling sick, and unable to rid himself of an impression that some one was saying, in a loud sonorous voice, 'And Cain rose up against his brother, and slew him,' he went on, reeling a little at the end. He followed Wilfrid into a lighted square hall, and there he felt dizzy and strange, and everything seemed to turn round before his eyes. Yet he was not fainting; he was conscious of the figure of Katharine Healey staring from one to the other of them in a scrutinising way. He sat down, and by-and-by Katharine gave him some brandy. Yes, rousing himself completely, he saw that it was her hand which held it to him, and her face beyond, regarding him with some interest, so that it

seemed quite a new face, and not the emotionless mask he was wont to see under Miss Healey's hat and long veil.

He looked at her, and smiled gratefully.

'I'm all right,' he answered to her glance of inquiry. 'How you must have been alarmed and distressed! You did not get any harm, sir?' he added, turning to Wilfrid.

'Not a scratch. That fellow has more mettle in him than I thought—but,' and his brow darkened, 'he's a hound for all that. How, in heaven's name, did you come to be on the spot?'

'I saw the look he gave you that Wednesday up at Healey, and I have heard, too, of threats he had spoken against you. I'd been reading till midnight, and was moon-gazing instead of sleeping, when I saw him go past with a look on his face that I didn't half like. Directly afterwards you rode by, and I was sure then that he was after no good. I just followed: I'm glad I was in time.'

‘You must have that arm spönged. I’ll make a light in the smoking-room.’

He went away, and Ughtred sat where he was, reviewing in his mind what had passed, until a light touch on his arm made him look up. He met Katharine’s eyes, and stared at her foolishly enough, for her face was alive with emotion. She was looking as it had never occurred to him that she *could* look.

‘I cannot thank you,’ she murmured. ‘I could not thank you, however I tried; for I have no words. There are no words to tell you what I feel. But I think you must be the bravest, best man that ever lived.’ With which she smiled gratefully, yet tears were running down her face at the same time.

For a moment he was bewildered, for he could not recognise this woman as the one he imagined he knew: then his cheeks grew hot; presence of mind deserted him most unaccountably, and he could only stammer out—

‘Indeed you exaggerate—you distress me. It was nothing. I am ashamed——’

‘Exaggerate my love for *him*! He might have been killed if you had not come forward and taken the blow,’ she almost sobbed. ‘Oh, I can never thank you as I ought; never!’

He did not know what to say. The easy magnanimous presence of mind and *savoir faire* proper to all heroes under such circumstances failed him. He could only stand blushing at the words of a selfish woman, knowing them to be selfish words; for if he had been a very martyr for any other than Wilfrid, Katharine would most certainly never have troubled her head about him.

Part of his confusion was due to his surprise at finding it possible for Miss Healey to display such emotion under any circumstances. He had dissociated in his mind the two ideas, Katharine Healey and impulse or emotional being. It had not occurred to him that she

might have emotions which were never suffered to appear. Consequently he could hardly believe that this trembling, tearful creature, whose eyes were ready to brim over, whose colour came and went, and whose lips quivered and smiled at the same moment, was Miss Healey—the woman whom he, inexperienced as he was, had seen to be an exceptional woman, and whom he considered *not* a desirable exception.

Now he was suddenly conscious of a great upsetting and upheaval of all his neatly-arranged, preconceived, and unproved ideas (our unproved impressions are generally as neatly and orderly arranged in our minds as our other ideas are tentative and variable). She could weep—she could redden and pale as vividly as another woman. It was confusing. The whole thing, after his quiet moonlight meditations, stunned him, and made him feel as if he had suddenly been awakened from a deep and dreamless sleep by the dis-

cordant crash of thunder, and had opened his ears to hear and his eyes to see a great tempest.

All this took but a moment or two to happen. All these new ideas and emotions passed through his mind, and shook his nerves with their force, in a very short space of time. It was not more than ten minutes now since he had seized Crier's arm in the road.

Wilfrid came out of the smoking-room, and called to them to come. Perhaps he had heard what had passed; at any rate, he turned to Katharine with a smile, laid his hand upon her shoulder for an instant, and said, in a mocking kind of way—

‘Crying, Kitty? Are you sorry Earnshaw did not leave me to my fate? Crier might have rid you of me.’

She made no answer, except to suddenly clasp the hand that touched her shoulder, and carry it to her lips with a quick, pas-

sionate gesture, and then lay it down again. So passionate was that little act, that Earnshaw was more astonished at seeing it than at all the rest of the night's events put together. It had the fierce impulsiveness of an Italian or South American. He felt almost as if he had done wrong to watch the brief weakness, for he could see that she felt it to be a weakness.

In the smoking-room Wilfrid made him turn up his sleeve, and Katharine sponged away the blood that had come from the stab he had received. She did it as gently and as skilfully, he found, as if she had never indulged in any more masculine pursuit than rug-work or embroidery.

Wilfrid stood by the table, whistling in a low key. He neither saw nor noticed his companions just then, for he was thinking about Crier; and at last he said, absently—

‘I shall not prosecute that fellow, Earnshaw.’

‘No?’

‘No. I can punish him in a way far more pleasant to myself, and more unpleasant to him, without making a stir about it. Do *you* care to have any revenge for that?’ and he pointed to the wrist that Katharine was deftly binding up with some strips of soft linen.

‘Not I,’ answered Ughtred, also looking down at the wrist, and at the white slender fingers that were moving about it. ‘He’s a poor, crawling creature; I should be very sorry to trouble my head about him. Let him rest! But don’t you think, sir, that he will take himself off from Hamerton pretty quickly? He will expect to be prosecuted.’

‘I don’t know. At any rate, if he goes away now he will come back again by-and-by; I’ve no fear of that.’

‘Neither have I,’ said Ughtred, as he reflected; ‘he will come back to Sara Holden.’ At the same time he felt unpleas-

antly impressed by Wilfrid's calmly-expressed conviction that Crier would return, and that he could punish him far more effectually than by prosecution. In what way? Sara Holden feared Crier. Wilfrid Healey said he could punish him, and looked as if he meant to do so, effectually.

No more reflections, however, for the wrist was now bound up, and Katharine said—

‘There, I think that will do, and I’m glad it is nothing serious.’

‘You are too kind to take so much trouble; and now I must go home again.’

‘Are you sure you can walk home?’ asked Katharine.

‘Oh, yes!’

‘Good - night, Earnshaw,’ said Wilfrid, heartily, with a look and a smile that made Ughtred think that, after all, it was perhaps not *very* wonderful that she should think a good deal of him.

Wilfrid, in addition to his gracious look,

extended his hand, and Katharine watched the two men a little eagerly.

‘You did me good service to-night, and I thank you for it,’ continued Wilfrid.

‘It is not worth mentioning,’ said Ughtred, accepting the proffered hand. For the first time master and man shook hands. It was a concession on either part.

‘This way,’ said Katharine, going with Earnshaw to the side-door they had entered by. And as he stood on the step, she too gave him her hand, and said, ‘To-night you have rendered me the most precious service that was possible. When you are in trouble, remember that Katharine Healey *never* forgets. If I believed in blessings, I would say, God bless you!’

He could make no answer; he could but press her hand in token that he understood and was grateful; and then he stepped out into the night again from the house which for him would thenceforth be haunted with undying memories.



CHAPTER X.

'And not only is there waste in animal and human life ; there is waste also in moral life. The instinct of love is planted in the human breast, and that which to some is a solace, is to others a torture.'—*The Martyrdom of Man.*



CARRIER did remain in Hamerton. Perhaps, had he been less absorbed in finding reasons for doing what he wished to do, he might have been put on his guard by Wilfrid's seeming mildness and indifference : as it was, that indifference suited him ; he found that he was left undisturbed ; he wished more than anything to remain where he was, and the wish was father to the deed : what he wished to do he did.

No true news of what had happened

got abroad at first. There were rumours, which by some means came out—how, it would be almost impossible to say. Ughtred's arm was in a sling for a week, and all his prevarications to Mrs. Holden did not utterly blind her to the conviction that something had happened, of which he would not give a full account. Crier one day remarked to an acquaintance, who had been speaking of Ughtred, that the latter was a 'murdering young villain;' and Sara, coming in one night from her work, looked pale and frightened, and took an opportunity after tea of telling Ughtred that she had heard 'as how th' master had tried to shoot Crier one night.' Ughtred laughed heartily, and said he was able to assure her that it was not so; upon which she looked at him earnestly, and said, 'Then Ab' has been agate o' shootin' *you?*' and looked significantly at his wrist.

But as none of the three men was inclined to relate the whole truth of the matter, the

rumours remained rumours, and were, generally speaking, in Wilfrid's disfavour.

Wilfrid had his own reasons for preserving silence. Crier's persistent efforts at a kind of retaliation had at last thoroughly roused the enmity of his former master, who, gathering his knowledge and his strength together, and letting it, with his dislike and resolve to be revenged, accumulate in silence, bided his time, sneering to think of his enemy's ignorance and impotence, but determined, when time and opportunity should be ripe, to crush him once and for all. A lucky chance (as he called it) had revealed to him Crier's inmost heart, and he felt his course open and clear before him. He was hot-tempered, but he was calculating too. If Crier, on the night of his attack upon Wilfrid, had been caught then, he would probably have come in for a hearty thrashing, and no more ; as it was, Wilfrid had time to nurse his anger and mature a deeper purpose. Crier had pre-

sumed to constitute himself *his* enemy—he should learn what kind of adversary he had undertaken to match himself with.

‘I’ll do it,’ thought Wilfrid; ‘I’ll shake the life out of him with one grip, as you’d shake it out of a rat, my beauty,’ and he patted his terrier and laughed inwardly. He was a very fine fellow in some eyes, and there was about him an open-handed lavishness which is not without its attraction to some orders of mind, but beneath it all was a capacity for patient hatred and persevering pursuit of ultimate revenge, not easily to be surpassed, and the more startling because of his frank manner and superficial liberality. It did not occur to him that he would have the least difficulty in carrying out his purpose. To him Crier was absurd rather than menacing; contemptible rather than dangerous.

As for Ughtred, if you had asked him why he did not have his revenge upon Crier by means of prosecution and legal punishment,

he would have been puzzled to understand you. To have troubled his head with the idea of retaliation, would have seemed to him simple insanity. But he did not, like his master, regard Crier as a contemptible wretch. That night's adventure had opened his eyes ; he saw that Crier was not an enemy to be despised, and he had gathered too, from the meandering stream of Mrs. Holden's conversation, that her daughter had once been disposed to listen favourably enough to the 'courting' of the former manager. He felt that Crier might have his wrongs, and that there might be more excuses than one for his persistent bitterness.

Crier himself kept counsel, for different reasons ; the chief of which was, that a deep suspicion had crossed his mind—a thought which made his heart stand still, and impelled him to pause and ponder upon certain circumstances of which he had become cognisant. He hugged himself joyfully so long as he

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saw Ughtred going about with his arm in a sling. He had failed in his larger purpose, but there was a bitter sweetness in the reflection that he had struck and injured a man whom he hated as he did Earnshaw; for Earnshaw had grown in his mind to seem part and parcel of the wrong done to him by Wilfrid Healey; and by this time he had got to believe that it was Wilfrid who had wronged him all through. All he felt was a scorching sense of impotency—of wronged, persecuted misery. He felt that he had sinned but a little, and that his punishment never stopped for a moment. The only solace left was to remain here, where his presence might gall, ever so little, some of those who had wronged him. He might have said, like Paracelsus—

‘I know as much of any will of God
As knows some dumb and tortured brute what man,
His stern lord, wills from the perplexing blows
That plague him every way; but there, of course,
Where least he suffers, longest he remains—
My case.’

He was aware, and he rejoiced in the knowledge, that if Katharine knew of the danger to which her brother had been exposed, her life would be a burden to her, and that whenever Wilfrid was absent she would suffer tortures of fear lest the danger should occur again.

Crier had not succeeded in getting work as a weaver—perhaps because he had not tried very hard. He gave it out that as a last resource only had he taken to his present employment—some kind of work at a brick and tile manufactory in the neighbourhood, where, in company with men, mostly, like himself, considerably lower in the social scale—even in *their* social scale—than when they started in life, he worked as a common labourer.

He had not miscalculated the effect upon Katharine of what had happened. So long as she knew that Crier was in the village and at large, her life *was* a burden to her.

Whenever Wilfrid was out in the evening, which was a frequent occurrence, she sat up for him, and none but she knew what she suffered in these lonely hours. Always weary with her day's work, which was increasing continually, she was too preoccupied and too exhausted to drown her importunate fears in reading. She could only sit still in the great lonely house, hearing distant sounds, feeling strange tremors, and dreading, with an all-absorbing fear, that some evil was happening to Wilfrid.

Crier had once attempted violence, that was enough ; upon that foundation she built murders and crimes full of horror. One idea had a dreadful fascination for her. She imagined herself sitting up all night, waiting for Wilfrid, who never came ; but in the grey morning, when she could bear it no longer, she rushed out to seek him, and found him lying murdered on the door-step. She indulged these thoughts until, panting

with fear and trembling with apprehension, she rose to pace the room in misery. When at last she used to hear Wilfrid's latch-key in the side-door, she could scarcely restrain the impulse to rush out and hang sobbing round his neck. She would have done it, only there was the possibility of a repulse of her embrace, and the words, 'Don't be so foolish, Kate,' which possibility was almost worse than all the waiting and fears put together.

This silent, intense suffering was telling rapidly upon her. A month after that dreadful night she was the shadow of her former self, and her nerve was not what it had been. She got irritated almost with trifles, and it was plain to see how heavily the burden of her daily work lay upon her. No doubt, if she had told Wilfrid that she felt ill and was overtasked, he would have said, 'Take a holiday: go where you like.' But to her, what could that mean? Only

that she would have more time in which to indulge her fears and griefs.

‘Do as you like’ is, when said to some people, like the opening of a long vista of pleasures; said to others, it is as bitter a satire as can be uttered. If nothing had occurred to make her speak to some one, she would have gone on enduring, fearing, growing worse; for, as is said in ‘Shirley,’ ‘Griefs and fears nursed in silence grow like Titan infants.’ Such epochs, such experiences, make fearful work with the sensitive organism of a delicate woman. Something, however, did intervene; a little thing, but it was enough.

One Tuesday, Katharine and Wilfrid were engaged to dine at Stanlaw. The invitation had been accepted, because, Katharine having demurred, Wilfrid took it into his head that she should go, and he with her. She had not known him do such a thing for many

years. She hated the Hamerton society ; detested its gossip, triviality, and inanity ; and was, moreover, apt to put on her haughtiest, most brusque and uncompromising manner when amongst the Hamerton women, who, she was aware, regarded her as something, if not exactly improper, at least unusual, bizarre, and to-be-fought-shy-of. However, Wilfrid had said they would go, and they were going.

In the afternoon she went to Healey. Half-way up the lane she encountered Crier. He was apparently conversing with a man who was breaking stones by the roadside, and he took up the man's hammer, and raised it with both hands above his head, as if illustrating some suggestion. He turned at the sound of the horse's hoofs, and Katharine saluted him with a slight nod, as Wilfrid had bidden her do should she meet him. He answered by a scowl, so full of unconcealed hatred and malice, that she was appalled, and

he brought the mallet down at the same moment with a savage blow upon a large stone. Long days and nights of anxiety and terror had weakened Katharine's nerve; her excited brain thrilled with fear at Crier's action, as if he had aimed a blow at herself; and at the actual sight of that dreaded face she felt every terror rush redoubled in force upon her. Foreboding she knew not what, she rode into the yard trembling, faint, and white as death.

When Ughtred, hearing her arrival, came out of the office, she could neither speak nor smile. She seemed paralysed, dropped the rein, and sat still.

Thinking she was ill or faint, he lifted her from her horse, with a mental parenthesis of indignation at Wilfrid Healey's brutality in letting a woman so fatigue herself. She walked into the office, and he, following, looked at her, waiting for her to speak. But she was silent, and Ughtred, gathering into

his heart the meaning of her palid face and terrified, hunted look, exclaimed earnestly—

‘Miss Healey, what has happened? What has alarmed and distressed you in this way?’

She heard: the kindly voice, the tone of sympathy, the eyes resting with human commiseration and interest upon her—all these had their effect; she leaned both arms upon the high, hard desk, let her face sink upon them, and gave a sigh like a wail.

‘Oh, I cannot bear it any longer!’ she whispered.

‘Bear it—bear what?’ he asked eagerly—stirred, he knew not why, and feeling his heart begin to beat faster.

She looked up, speaking what seemed to him most meaningless words.

‘What a happy man you must be!’

‘I?’

‘Yes; for you are not rich, and I don’t believe you have any enemies——. Wilfrid has.’

She finished with quivering lips.

Earnshaw did not speak, but looked gravely at her, feeling his 'business-woman' theory tottering at its very base.

'That man is at large,' she went on. 'Wilfrid has suffered him to go unpunished this time, and he will have his life in the end—— what will mine be worth, then?'

Earnshaw felt a wave of such pity as he had never imagined before sweeping over his heart. Pity, not only for her fear and sorrow, but for that which caused it; pity that she should suffer thus on account of the Upas-tree of her life. He was so sorry, that his voice trembled as he said—

'You mean Crier, I suppose?'

'Yes, I met him just now, and he looked at me as if he longed to spring at me and take my life as he would have taken *his*. My heart will never be at rest for one second while I know he is here.'

As he spoke his answer, it struck Ughtred

that Sara Holden's words to him a few weeks ago had been almost identical with these.

'I am quite certain he knows that Mr. Healey saw him that night, and forbears from prosecuting him simply from generosity; and if he *has* any human feeling, that will hold him back from further harm.'

She shook her head mournfully.

"Ah, no! He knows better than that; he knows it is the hope of punishing him more effectually some other time which makes Wilfrid let him go free now.'

Earnshaw was silent a while, and then said as cheerfully as he could—

'I feel sure he will never attempt violence again, and we can be on our guard against other things.'

'On our guard! Ever since that night I have been trying to think of some way of being on my guard, and I cannot. I never feel safe. I spend all night and every night

in terror. Oh, I do not know how I am to endure it all!’

Silence again for a few minutes. Katharine did not weep, as most women would have done; her moans were wrung from her by the very extremity of suffering.

During the whole of this time Ughtred could not get rid of a kind of phantom of Sara Holden, which hovered about. Yet why should Katharine’s emotion remind him of Sara’s? It was so different. He believed Katharine to be a most reticent, courageous woman, while Sara was ignorant, and full of fears at everything, from a ghost to a Harry-long-legs. At last, with some diffidence, he ventured to offer the only comfort he had in his power; almost fearing, as he did so, that he would be thought officious.

‘Will you think me presumptuous if I offer to do all I can to help you? You know I see Crier much oftener than you do, and know his habits, because I am in very much

the same station of life as his. I can easily keep a watch over him. I have opportunities (or if not—to himself—‘I can make them’). I shall be only too glad to serve you.’

Her face suddenly flushed up, and a light came into her eyes, as she answered with emotion—

‘You saved my brother’s life, and I think nothing can be too good for you. But—but—till then I never looked upon you in any other light than that of a useful machine. Do you know that?’ and she confronted him as she made the confession.

‘Yes, I know,’ said Ughtred, smiling. ‘Why, indeed, should you have thought of me in any other way?’

‘Your comfort, your happiness, your health and welfare, were nothing, simply *nothing*, to me,’ pursued Katharine. ‘Did you know *that*?’

He did know it, yet he was piqued to

hear it so tersely stated by her own lips. At that moment she looked so like the Miss Healey of his earlier acquaintance, that he almost felt as if he had been committing himself to some sentimental folly by his offer of help. He replied, rather curtly,

‘I knew it—knew it well. What then?’

‘You still offer to help me, and to take this trouble for me and for Wilfrid, who looked upon you in the same light as I did?’

‘I offer to help *you*,’ he answered with some scorn; ‘if I stopped to reckon up your behaviour to me before offering, my help would be of little value—it’s of little value in any case. But do you suppose that I can bear to see you—that I could bear to see any woman suffer as you have been suffering lately (no one could help seeing it), and not offer to help her ever so little, however poor my help may be? And besides, you do not treat me as a machine now—not at all.’

She half stammered, and looked wholly ashamed, as she answered—

‘You have noticed all these things, and wondered what right *I*, of all people, had to treat my fellows so.’

‘I have never questioned your right to do as you please in that respect. But you have not told me whether you accept my small service.’

‘If you will let me call you my friend—my kind, generous friend,’ said she earnestly.

It was his turn to flush a little, and his laugh was a trifle embarrassed as he replied—

‘You make too much of it. A good servant should make his master’s interests his own; and what I offer to do is so very little, and may prove so very needless.’

‘That’s nonsense! If you do this for me; if you keep a watch over Crier, and run a risk in so doing—for I have no trust in him, he is as treacherous as a panther—if you do this, you are not my servant, but

my friend. I am selfish enough to long very much to accept your kindness, but I am too proud to take it on any other terms than those I have named. Act for me as my friend, and I'll thank you and be true to you.' She ended by holding out her hand.

Her friend! He could scarcely believe his ears. Katharine Healey, of all women, asking him to be her friend! A still small voice within whispered that such a friendship could not be easily maintained. Could it be maintained at all? If ever,—it was most unlikely; but *if* ever Miss Healey, a proud and reserved woman, had to own him, a working-man, a subordinate, for her friend, before others of her own station, he did not believe she would shirk it, but she would do it with an effort; and would not that very effort show that the thing was absurd, abnormal, impossible? Now, at this moment, she was relieved by his proposal, and was full of gratitude: her gratitude was as out of pro-

portion to his benefit as might be expected from one who seldom received a kindness. It would scarcely be honourable in him to take advantage of that. And then, too, he did not believe she understood how keenly he felt the large undoubting frankness of her proposal. Would she have proposed such a thing to her equal? Was not this the voice of reason which told him how much wiser it would be in him to remain in his old position, that of her servant? He stood irresolute; and it was she who at last broke the silence, withdrawing her hand at the same time.

‘I am sorry I have annoyed you upon such a subject. My friendship, I know, is not a very tempting or desirable thing.’

She spoke with a bitter humility, as if she felt what she said to the core of her heart; and she spoke, too, with the offended pride of a woman who conceives that her candour has been misunderstood. How many women

are there who have not thus been sharply reminded, now and then, that their duty is to die rather than be the first to speak in such a matter?

As the words left her mouth, Ughtred suddenly became conscious that he desired this friendship more than he had allowed to himself. Who was he, who were his friends (their name, indeed, was not Legion), that he should withdraw so churlishly? What right had he to offend Katharine Healey on this point?

And—admitted last of all, but outweighing every other argument—he thought—it might be absurd and impertinent,—but he believed she cared a little to have him for her friend, apart from Wilfrid's cause. He thought this and more in two or three seconds, and then looked into her face. Did he detect there a shade of personal feeling—the faintest trace of grieved kindness, of sorrow, of pain? He said, fervently—

‘You quite understand me? I was thinking that you honour me too much. I am not insensible to the favour you would confer. I hesitate because I value it so highly.’

‘To convince you of my sincerity on this point, I will run the risk of a second refusal, and say again, Will you do what you have offered, and do it as my *friend*?’

‘I will indeed! You may trust me to death.’

She did trust him; then and ever after.





CHAPTER XI.

‘Getting fast tired o’ the game whose word is “Wait!”’

—BROWNING.

KATHARINE was so relieved at Ughtred’s promise of help, that she came downstairs with something like a smile that evening, ready to start with Wilfrid for Stanlaw.

He was not quite ready when she came down, and it was seven before they drove away from their own door, consequently the guests were all assembled when they arrived.

‘What a handsome man! What a very plain woman!’ was the chief idea in the minds of the collected and hungry guests as

'Mr. and Miss Healey' were announced, and a general feeling of surprise was experienced. Wilfrid knew that by the Hamerton people in general he was held to be a dangerous character. He knew that both he and Katharine appeared so seldom at any of the village festivities, that one would not be far out in saying they *never* went anywhere. He knew perfectly well what that little movement, that rustling of silks, that pause in the murmur (the very, *very* subdued murmur) of before-dinner conversation meant; for at Hamerton they have not the consummate breeding (or want of it) which enables society in the centres of civilisation to ignore a new-comer as perfectly as if he came not. But he was fully equal to the occasion. If he had been a small, ugly, or insignificant person in appearance, or vulgar and ignorant in manner, his perfect indifference as to being the last arrival, at having kept the rest of the people waiting some ten minutes, would

have been called what it was, ill-bred, self-conceited, insufferable, snobbish ; for we are wonderfully apt at coining and remembering abusive terms. But he was none of those things. His very presence in the room seemed to change the aspect of the party. It appeared as if not only were the tale of those bidden to the feast complete, but also that *the* guest had arrived, and that the party, which before had been but a loose-limbed, imperfect concern, was now harmonious and complete.

The women eyed him with mingled fear and admiration : with fear, because it is correct to fear a 'bad man,' who is always a kind of modified Satan (and who is to the correct youth of this day what Old Bogey was to the correct infancy of the same) : with admiration, because they could not help admiring beauty, grace, and distinction, with a glance that quelled and flattered them at the same moment, whether those qualities

pertained to a good or to a bad man. Only, if they had belonged to a good man, they would have been much the same as certain dishes without *sauce piquante*; and then, too, a good man is no uncommon sight at a dinner-party.

The men eyed this Bad Man's sister, and vowed to themselves that she was plain, forbidding, and strong-minded-looking; and had, moreover, that in her face, which seemed to say that she knew more of the wrong side of life and human nature than it is good for a woman to know—if she wishes to fulfil her mission of being charming.

Frank Ormerod, observing the manner in which she was greeted by Louis Kay, bethought himself, with an inward sense of pleasure in his own far-sightedness, 'no doubt his stone quarries and her coal pits would be quite as profitable united as divided.'

During the long dinner Katharine sat quite contented, nearly happy. Wilfrid for

that evening, at any rate, was safe. He would be before her eyes almost the whole time; he would drive home with her. She was at peace. For a few hours she might dare to forget Crier, his sinister face and look of hate.

She found herself taken to dinner by a clergyman from Thanshope, evangelic in principle and belief. He was a tedious person; that is, he held very positive views upon most subjects (as positive as those of M. Comte, only in a different direction); his ideas had a limited horizon, and he wished to make his neighbour understand that unless her views were the same as his own, she was in a very bad way indeed with regard both to present and future existence. He lacked the art of enforcing his views in a witty or agreeable manner; and therein lies the only difference between people who are tedious and people who are not tedious.

He probably thought Katharine a very

disagreeable, stiff-necked young woman, particularly when she contradicted an ill-founded assertion or two of his with respect to the working classes, hinting that his profession might possibly prejudice his views.

He mildly suggested that ladies were not supposed to be *au fait* upon such matters. Upon this Miss Healey cited proofs of the correctness of her assertion, and stated that it was not her habit to dogmatize upon subjects with which she was imperfectly acquainted.

The tedious gentleman was nettled; stupidity does not argue absence of irascibility; and Darwin tells us that Batrachians, though cold-blooded and far from intelligent, have very strong passions. The tedious gentleman could not think of owning that he had met in a weaker vessel his superior in information and argument. He took the more usual and approved course of setting her down as 'masculine' (no doubt judging her capacities from his own), and not quite right.

Alone with the ladies, Katharine sat, feeling quite out of her element and very sleepy.

One young lady, Miss Ormerod, of the No-Popery Faction, very kindly tried to find some interesting topics of conversation for Miss Healey, and asked if she were acquainted with Mr. Blenkinsop.

‘I have been introduced to him.’

‘He preaches so beautifully; he is such a very clever young man.’

‘Really! I should never have guessed that.’

‘No; would you? He has not that look at all. There is something very simple and nice in his manners and appearance.’

‘I complimented him upon his sermons the other day,’ said Mrs. Kay, blandly. ‘Miss Healey was here. She has seen little of him, but that little she admires immensely.’

‘He is very literary,’ said Miss Ormerod, anxious to let Miss Healey observe that there were other blues than herself in Hamerton.

'He tells me of many books, and that is so nice, because now really so many books are written which are not nice for ladies at any rate to read. Some one in our book-club wanted Lecky's *European Morals* introduced, but Mr. Blenkinsop said to *me* that he would not advise us to get it; he did not think it either a religious or a useful work. Such a very nice way of putting it, you know; for I was sure from the name that it must be something naughty.'

Thinking that dinner-parties were, after all, rather amusing, Katharine turned to her engaging little neighbour with almost a smile, and was struck with the fact that she was very pretty, girlish, gentle-looking, with soft, happy eyes, 'and about as old as I am,' she mentally added, with a kind of wonder at herself.

Before she could speak there was a little stir as the door opened, and some of the men came in.

Louis made his way at once to the chair next to hers.

‘I have never been able to speak to you for a second, Katharine. Do you know,’ dropping his voice, ‘I am distressed no little to see you look so ill. What have you been doing to get so fagged and worn-out?’

‘Nothing, nothing,’ she answered hastily.

‘Yes, you have. You have no business to be always cooped up in this wretched place. Wilfrid ought to make you go away.’

‘Pray put no such idea into his head. Not only would it do me no good, but—— I wouldn’t go.’

‘But surely you have more time now. You engaged that man I told you of, I think; how does he do?’

‘Perfectly; nothing could suit us better. I have to thank you for introducing him to us.’

‘Nay, I am paid, and paid a thousand times, if he saves you any trouble, or is of use to you.’

This speech jarred upon Katharine. A short time ago it would not have done so, but as she bethought herself that it was Ughtred Earnshaw who was thus spoken of, she rebelled, and was angry with Louis.

‘Mrs. Kay seems to have got together a very Protestant party this evening,’ said she at length.

‘Yes, has not she?’

‘But,’ continued she, dryly, ‘Miss Ormerod has been taking me in hand very kindly since dinner.’

‘Oh, Katharine!’ said Louis, biting his lip with vexation, ‘it galls me more than you could guess to hear you talk in that way—you, who are fifty thousand times better than any of these people—you, whose notice, if you had the place you ought to have, would be courted by the most arrogant of the women here. Taking you in hand! I hope you put her down at once and completely.’

‘Indeed no; it was very amusing.’

‘I don’t feel at all amused, but very much annoyed.’

‘I cannot see what feeling you can possibly have in the matter,’ said Katharine, feeling rebellious again, for she knew perfectly well that he was speaking to her with the interest that men only feel in *the* woman; she knew too that he did not in the least strive to conceal his admiration, and that he was pleased to see how every one mentally made notes of his behaviour and hers. She saw, too, that Wilfrid and Mrs. Kay, in conversation, looked at herself and Louis, and smiled. And she must sit still under it all, because Louis was the only man for whose opinion Wilfrid cared a straw; the only man who could bend or influence him in any way, and she did not dare to offend him.

‘Perhaps you *will* not see, Katharine,’ said Louis earnestly.

‘Oh, we will not talk about it. I am

naturally stupid in such matters. Yes, Mrs. Kay, I will play whist. I am quite ready.'

She rose to join the other players, but was absent enough during the game, and at last awakened with a start to hear Mrs. Kay say in a sepulchral voice—

'Katharine Healey! A *revoke*!'

She apologised to her partner, and found that Louis was standing behind her chair, watching the game.

A slow party—slow people. Katharine came away from it with all the little brightness which had dawned upon her in the morning extinguished.

From Ughtred Earnshaw's voice, manner, and words she had derived comfort, but this evening every look, every tone of Louis Kay had said, 'I am weary of waiting so humbly, and ere long I shall put a definite question and expect a definite answer.' She dared not contemplate that moment: she tried to believe it very remote and far away,

and she said in her heart that she too was tired—tired of everlastingly annihilating herself, her own wishes and delights. What was life worth to her? why should she trouble to live when each day brought only fresh pain and fresh renunciation? She daily sacrificed every bright and pleasant thing to business: already her life was sombre enough, and too much so; why make it more so? Bitter enough was her face as she loosened her hair that night. The long, thick, wavy tresses fell down and around, and formed the loveliest of frames to a discontented, hopeless, joyless face.

Few women can well feel more lonely and ill-conditioned than Katharine Healey at that moment. Almost her worst sorrow was her uncertainty whether Wilfrid cared for her. Sometimes she almost thought he did, on those few occasions when he kissed her and patted her cheek. Then again, she told herself, with a bitter laugh at her own simplicity, that she

must indeed be dull not yet to have learned by heart her lesson, that men never care for anything but themselves and their passions.

She was rich in her own right, and Wilfrid was lavish to her where money was concerned, as if to point an irony upon her tastes and habits, which were of the utmost simplicity. She had *carte blanche* in that respect, and might fill it up as she chose. And he often brought her presents, jewels, for which hundreds of virtuous and far more conventionally correct women than Katharine would have paid a long price! She took some of them off to - night, and holding in her hand a glittering serpent, along whose back flashed the prisms of diamonds and the burning of rubies, she let herself wander for a moment into a Fool's Paradise, and pictured Wilfrid coming to her with some such words as 'Kate, I am ruined; I have lost all I have; we have nothing to turn to but our love for each other.'

‘God ! how happy I should be !’ she sighed, but threw down the necklace, adding, ‘instead of that, he grows richer and richer ; more and more careless.’

She pushed the jewels away with a gesture full of repulsion, and turned out the light.





CHAPTER XII.

'More commonly they (*i.e.*, strikes) originate with the men themselves, springing out of some grievance, real or supposed; and, *more commonly still*, their authors are the professional agitators, of whom, wherever unionism flourishes, a certain sprinkling is sure to be found hanging about its skirts. In the clothing districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire there is a regular gang. . . . Their special vocation is to kindle or fan dissension between employers and employed. . . . These . . . I am inclined to believe to be the real authors of nine out of ten of such strikes as are not provoked by unreasonable pretensions or obstinacy on the part of masters.'—THORNTON *On Labour*.

WILL it be considered a plagiarism if the remark is here made—the trite remark—that vexations and annoyances seldom or never come singly? Sometimes they hunt in couples, but more commonly they are gregarious, and go in considerable herds, overwhelming and stranding one completely at the last by their size and vigour.

For some days after the slow dinner-party at Stanlaw, Katharine's vexations were chiefly composed of an access of ill-temper and unreasonableness on Wilfrid's part.

There had been a strike amongst the colliers, which had put him out excessively. The men were obstinate, and Wilfrid and Earnshaw had at last decided to bring in some men from Cornwall. The experiment was both risky and expensive, but it was decided that it should be tried. A large number of Cornishmen, with their families, had arrived a few weeks before, and, with some difficulty, accommodation had been found for them in and about the village. This would have been impossible if Wilfrid had not been himself the owner of many cottages. He and Earnshaw had of course made it their object to secure as many young and unmarried men as possible; feeling that families would be in the way, for this age of great inventions has even introduced

the new name of 'incumbrances' as applied to a wife and children.

So far, so good. The 'knobsticks,' as the strange workmen were called, were allowed to proceed with their work, though they had chiefly gone to and from it in gangs, escorted by policemen, and there had been one or two small skirmishes between colliers on strike and the interlopers. On the whole, however, the experiment had succeeded: Katharine and Earnshaw had, only a day or two ago, congratulated themselves upon it, though ~~not~~ exactly liking the unusually peaceful way in which the change had been effected.

Higher wages had tempted the Cornishmen from home, and those without 'incumbrances' approved strongly of the change; but the men who had wives and daughters were not much better off than before, and ere long some of the girls applied for work in the factory. Loud had been the murmurs, strong the asseverations, that if any of the

strangers were allowed to become weavers, the Lancashire hands would strike.

One day Katharine had, by Wilfrid's order, intimated to Butterworth that as some two-score looms were standing still for want of hands, he was to admit some of the Cornish girls on the following Monday. Butterworth had looked dubious, and said that the project, so far from setting the forty looms in question going, would probably stop every one in the weaving shed. Katharine said curtly that she could not help that; the master had ordered it,—*ergo*, it must be done. She had, however, talked to Wilfrid, and had advised him to think again on the subject. In answer, he had refused in pretty round terms to alter his decision; had announced that he would be master; had called his work-people many wicked names, and said he would teach them to oppose him.

On Tuesday morning he came down very late, and over his breakfast, while Katharine

read his letters to him, said that if those somethinged rascals *did* strike, he'd—— An impressive pause and a certain obstinate twist of the lips made Katharine quake within herself. Wilfrid could do nothing to his hands, but he could make *her* very miserable if the strike lasted some time.

She happened to know, too, that Crier had lately embraced the *métier* of an agitator; one who went about sowing dissension between masters and men, making quarrels and misunderstandings wherever he could. He had gladly taken advantage of the actual discontent of Wilfrid's colliers and factory hands; the quarrel opened up a fine vantage-ground for him, and his latest triumph had been a meeting, ostensibly a lecture on 'The Rights of Labour and the Duties of Capital,' in reality a violent exhortation to strike. Mr. Crier told the men how they were tyrannized over and imposed upon, how they had to work in the sweat of their

brows, while the oppressor sat by in luxury and looked on, never troubling himself to move unless to give another turn to the screw. Mr. Crier then clearly proved, alike from Psalms, Isaiah, and 'Revelations,' that it was the duty of 'any man as *was* a man' to strike.

'Strike!' said Mr. Crier, 'and show that you know how to use the privilege of the English working man.'

Katharine had not heard the result of the harangue, but she had nearly a certainty what it would be.

From his breakfast Wilfrid drove to Thanshope to catch a Manchester train, and Katharine rode to the mill. Even before she got there, she saw that what she feared had come to pass. There were knots of idlers about the mill-end; and when she stayed her horse for a moment and listened, her ears confirmed the ill news, for they were met by silence. No hum of machinery

— no shrill women's voices singing beyond the hum as usual.

Riding up to the office, she called to Butterworth, and asked—

‘What does this mean?’

‘The weavers have struck, Miss Healey.’

‘I can see that. Why did they strike?’

‘Half-a-dozen o’ them Cornish lasses started work this morning, and the hands turned out, every one.’

A pause.

‘I knew they would,’ added Butterworth; ‘I’ve seen it all along. *They* wont put up with knobsticks. They’ve been ill-vexed for long. Openshaw’s and Cheetham’s wouldn’t have the Cornish girls; and if master had aken my——’

‘Chut!’ said she, impatiently. ‘Openshaw’s and Cheetham’s are slaves to their hands; every one knows that.’

‘And yon Crier,’ proceeded Mr. Butterworth in an undertone—‘he’s had a deal to do with

this row. I don't think they'd have struck if he hadn't worked 'em up to it. Lads might, happen, but lasses would be working now if they durst.'

'Was Crier agitating on his own account?'

'He was, and he wasn't. He was paid by them as knows what they're about; but he took the job fair out of malice to you and the master.'

'Well, I must hear what the master says about it before I give any directions.'

And so she rode away with what cheer she might to Healey.

In the course of conversation, Ughtred asked her if she knew that the weavers had struck.

'Yes,' she answered, drearily; 'but Mr. Healey does not; and I don't know what he will say to it. I am afraid to tell him of it.'

She spoke half to herself, sighing as she finished; but though she said she was afraid, she was mentally considering the best way of telling Wilfrid the bad news; for she always

had the bad news, whatever it might be, to tell.

Ughtred's voice broke in upon her reverie. He had a railway time-table in his hand, and was looking at it.

'Mr. Healey will know all about it before he sees you,' said he, in a matter-of-fact voice. 'I am going to Thanshope; and my train, I see, is the special-service one from Manchester, by which he returns. I shall see him at the station, and will be the bird of ill omen on this occasion—unless, indeed, he knows already.'

'Will you really? Oh, how kind you are! But I am afraid he will be very angry.'

'He will hardly blame me for a strike amongst his weavers.'

'Tell him it is Crier who has worked them up to it,' said she. 'Though I don't suppose that will be of much use.'

'You may depend upon me, and I hope Mr. Healey's anger will have blown over before he sees you.'

'You are very good, and I am very grateful,' said she. 'I wonder how this strike will end?'

Earnshaw shook his head.

'I don't know: the Lancashire working man is not remarkable for pliability of character, or readiness to be convinced that he is in the wrong.'

Katharine stared a little. Mr. Crier had never indulged in generalizations of that kind. Yet Ughtred was right, and she assented to what he had said.

It was something quite new for her to ride away conscious that there was something unpleasant to be told to Wilfrid, and conscious at the same time that it was not she who would have to tell it. It was something new, and, for a wonder, something pleasant; she hardly recognized herself. Still, she was so tied by habit, that she waited Wilfrid's return with something like perturbation of mind.

She was in the library when she heard him come in. That step, which she never mistook, sounded upon the tiles of the hall. She tried to look up with unconcern into his face as he came in, but her heart beat so fast and so thickly, it seemed to make a stunning noise in her ears, and almost to dim her eyes as she glanced at him. Her heart fell. He looked perfectly indifferent. Not a frown nor a shadow troubled his face, which wore that look of supercilious good-humour indicating his conviction that all was going well with him. Katharine feared with almost absolute certainty that he did not know. He looked at her as he strolled into the room, smiled, and said in a gracious tone—

‘Why, Kitty, you look rather down. Let’s have a kiss, old girl.’

Oh, if all had been right outside, how she would have returned that kiss! No caresses of the best man in the world were ever so

dearly prized as those which the scapegrace Wilfrid Healey bestowed upon his sister, 'Like angels' visits, few and far between.'

But Katharine had that strike lying heavily upon her mind, and Wilfrid's kiss fell upon trembling lips. He was surprised not to have his caress returned. Usually Katharine responded with eager gladness to any lurking symptom of fondness on his part.

'What's the matter?' he demanded, quickly.

'Dear Wilfrid, did not you see Mr. Earnshaw? I thought he would meet you at the station.'

'Oh, I saw Earnshaw; yes. What then?'

'Did not he tell you?' she began; her heart failing in the belief that Ughtred had not done as he promised, after all.

'He told me one or two things. He says the weavers have struck. More fools they,' Katharine could scarcely believe her ears

as she heard the perfectly calm, even cheerful tone in which this was said.

‘I thought you would be so angry, Wilfrid.’

He shrugged his shoulders. ‘Angry! One knave is a match for many fools.’

‘I’m not an interpreter of dark sayings.’

‘No; I’m aware you are no Daniel. I am alluding to my Christian friend, Ab o’ Ben’s, who seems resolved to be even with me.’

‘Do you mean to take any steps in the matter?’

‘I mean to take steps away from home with——.’ He stopped, looked quickly at her, and bit his lip, with a muttered laugh.

‘With Louis, I suppose?’ said Katharine, not paying much attention to the answer.

‘No; without loss of time,’ replied he, coolly. ‘This strike happens just to suit me. While I am enjoying myself these fellows will be coming to their senses. When they have spent all their money, and

got to quarrelling amongst themselves, why, *then* I'll come home, point out how foolish they have been, and have all square again.'

Too puzzled to be conversational, Katharine sat meditating. This was strange behaviour from Wilfrid. Since he neither stormed nor swore, there must be reasons for his reticence; reasons which he did not choose to tell her. She had dreaded a storm, but this unexpected calm was even more oppressive than the storm: as if one went to see a sick friend, expecting to find him raving in delirium, and beheld instead a neatly-ordered couch, whereon reposes our friend indeed, but still and calm, because dead.

At last she said slowly—

'Well, I'm glad you do not think it anything serious.'

'Serious! Bah! But Kay is coming to dinner to-night; I met him in town and asked him. He will be here at half-past six, so don't forget.'



CHAPTER XIII.

'In the calm light-waved stream, or on the snow-topped mountains,
In the last golden rays that crown bright fountains,
'Mid the blue fields of starlight thou art smiling,—Adelaida !'

KATHARINE and Louis sat alone after dinner was over in the sitting-room of the former. It was on her mind to ask Louis if he knew the reason of Wilfrid's sudden patience under adversities brought about 'by the subtlety of the devil or man;' and she began by saying—

'You know Wilfrid's weavers have struck?'

'Yes, I heard so this morning.'

‘Do you know, I was so frightened? I did not know how to tell Wilfrid, and Mr. Earnshaw did it for me.’

‘*You* frightened, Katharine! Why, I thought there was nothing in the heavens above or on the earth beneath that could turn you pale.’

‘Except Wilfrid when he is angry, and then he does not turn me pale; he only makes me very miserable. But he has been perfectly quiet about this. He has never even expressed any annoyance. He says it *suits* him. I don’t know what it means, and I am uneasy about it.’

‘Oh, nonsense!’ said he quickly, the least possible annoyance appearing in his expression. ‘Why should he be disturbed about a parcel of fools like those? They won’t hold out more than a week.’

‘Perhaps not; but I have seen him *very* angry about less causes than that. Louis! do you know anything about it?’ and she

laid her hand upon his for an instant, and looked at him earnestly.

‘Nothing.’

She sighed, and he went on—

“Why should I conceal from you anything I knew, Katharine?”

‘That’s more than I can say.’

‘You do not believe me!’ he persisted, in an aggrieved voice.

‘Oh, yes, of course; why should I *not*?’

He smiled, and taking up a book from the table said—

‘Here is *Romola*. Let me read to you. May I?’

She assented, and showed him the place where she had left off. He read several chapters in a voice clear, full, and not too deep, and with a wonderfully delicate expression and appreciation, ceasing only at the end of the tale, for Katharine had nearly finished it. Then he laid down the book, and Katharine sighed.

'That book, wonderful though it is, depresses me,' said Louis. 'I feel all hope dead when I have finished it. It shuts me in like a high wall, and there is nothing beyond.'

'I like it because it is so true. How do we know anything about what is beyond? Depend upon it, it is the most foolish thing in the world to talk about such things.'

'But a definite hope must be a great comfort.'

'I could never have a definite hope. I should always be reminding myself that I had no higher authority for it than my own imagination.'

'Then are you hopeless?' he asked, with some eagerness.

'I think so; for I never yet, in any trouble, looked to the future with the idea of being better off some time; and I cannot imagine myself doing so under any circumstances. I have no theory about the future; and of

other people's theories I like best that of annihilation.'

Louis smiled, and seemed not at all ill-pleased to hear her avowal.

Katharine presently went to the piano, opened it, and said, 'Now, Louis, I'll tax you to sing or play to me.'

'It is a waste of time,' he answered, reluctant to leave her side—more willing to hear her sad, subdued voice speak to him and answer him.

'Not if you want to give me real pleasure. One of the few delights I have lies in hearing you sing and play.'

No more opposition followed. He sat down, and sang and played one thing after another; and Katharine, in the dusk, was near, listening, rapt. She had been carefully taught, but she could neither sing nor play, except in a mechanical, laborious way. She could not release any feeling of joy or grief, of woe or gladness, by her tongue or her fingers.

Hers was a dumb spirit. But her nature vibrated with intense sympathy to sounds from other fingers or other lips. She sat looking out through the open window (she remembered this night in after days, but she never quite understood all its meaning). The spire-like fir-trees outside pointed weirdly with their long fringed fingers here and there, and

‘The spirits trailed among the pines low laughter like a breeze,
And high between their swinging tops the stars appeared to freeze.’

Perhaps Louis knew her mood, for he carefully confined himself to songs that had in them calm and serenity : no wild ballads or stormy passion scenes. Every moment she was growing more and more calmed, more and more at rest. The voice which, in speaking, always (to her ears) fell short of perfect faith, rang true enough in song ; and, indeed, it is not amiable nor feminine in any one to distrust the owner of a voice which gives every note with the most exquisite truth of tone, and the most faultless expression—im-

passioned, yet reticent; grave and modest, yet most thoroughly in earnest.

After finishing Mendelssohn's 'Expectation' he paused, as if considering, and then looked at Katharine. Her cheek was resting on her hand, but he could see that she was half smiling with the intense pleasure of the lovely sounds that had ceased. Louis, after that glance, turned again to the piano, and after the prelude of but two or three chords, began to sing 'Adeläida,' putting into every note the most intense and passionate meaning. The door was open, and the delicious sounds went floating through the house, till Wilfrid paused in his own quarters in the act of lighting his second cigar, and the domestics came as near as they dared, and whispered how beautiful it was. Katharine forgot to be uneasy, and allowed herself to be happy in that music.

'In the calm light-waved stream, or on the snow-topped mountains,
In the last golden rays that crown bright fountains,
'Mid the blue fields of star-light thou art smiling,
Adeläida!'

All that song was directed to her, and she knew it. The story was told to her; that passionate voice was sent to find its way to her heart and touch it. Never did lover address song to his mistress in more downright earnest and fervour than did Louis Kay to Katharine Healey that night.

When he ceased she had turned away; she had gone to the window and was standing there, a misty-looking, lavender-clad figure. She did not speak. She was terribly disturbed that he should have done this; but to have tried to ignore his song and speak of other things would have been to insult him, and she dared not do that. Sometimes she wished she dared. Probably, had she been free and unconstrained, she would have loved her half-cousin Louis. As it was——!

He came to where she stood, and said in a low voice——

‘How do you like that, Katharine?’

‘It is a beautiful song,’ she answered, with

an effort. 'Perhaps the most beautiful that was ever composed.'

'Beautiful songs are nothing, sung without meaning. I would not give a straw to hear that sung at a concert by the finest voice in the world, unless it was sung *to* some one in the audience.'

'No?'

'Indeed no, Katharine! You know what I meant when I sang "Adelaida;" I sang it to you.'

'Louis!' said she, imploringly, 'do not, do not say these things. I cannot speak of them—now.'

'You know I would do anything you bade me,' he answered, his face betraying his exultation. 'On this occasion, Katharine, your wish is my law; but remember—unless your rule relaxes some time, before very long I must rebel.'

'Oh, do not speak of it, for heaven's sake!' cried she, seeing all at once that her words

had had exactly the opposite effect to that she had intended to give them. Louis had taken them to mean a definite hope of final success; that was why he yielded so readily, and bowed with such instant acquiescence. At all risks she determined to try and lower his confident expectations, and to that end she said—

‘I want us always to be friends, Louis—*always.*’

‘So do I. If I had my way, and could befriend you as I desire, you should never know a sorrow or a care again. I know how sad and shaded your life has been—I would make it one broad blaze of sunshine from now till death. If I could do that, I should feel I had lived to some purpose.’

‘Oh,’ she almost gasped, startled by the quiet but intense energy of his manner; ‘it is wrong to talk in that way. If I were as happy as that, I should fear that my bliss was only a preparation for some dreadful

punishment to come hereafter. It is not good for any one to have so much happiness.'

'What a frightened, shrinking creature you are! Only let me show you what that happiness means: you should soon say that it is not only good, but the best lot that any one could have. Ah, when once one has conceived that happiness, and known one with whom it might be possible, every other feeling is lukewarm, miserable, worthless!'

'Louis, you frighten me by the way in which you talk. You speak as if your whole existence hung on this thing.'

'My existence may not, but my happiness does.'

'And I say that to stake your happiness upon any one thing that this life can give, is not only folly, but *insanity*. See how strongly you feel upon this, and how confident you are. It would be very different if only yourself were in the case, but—

there is another, and—I do not feel as you feel.’

She had forced herself to say the words, but they had no sooner passed her lips than she repented having uttered them, bethinking herself that if Louis became her enemy, she might as well give up every hold upon life that at present sustained her. She waited, trembling, to hear what he would say; and when the answer came, it struck her with mingled relief and disappointment.

‘I know you do not feel as I feel. I have loved you for years. Every year my love has been growing stronger; now you typify for me the ideal of happiness, and I cannot contemplate life without you.’

A pause, during which Katharine’s lips silently formed the words, ‘You *must*, though,’ but she dared not utter them.

‘But you have had no time for such things. How has your life been passed? Is it likely that your mind should have any room

for the follies in which most girls spend their lives? No; you are too earnest, too strong, too sad, Katharine, to even conceive of such frivolities as flirtation, and such "love-affairs" as go on in these days. And your life has been too shadowed with Wilfrid and his—well, dear, I will not speak of that. What I mean to say is, that as your nature is no common, careless, shallow one, so no common, careless, shallow love will ever make you happy. It may be arrogant and egotistic in me to say that mine is no common love——'

'No, no, I am sure of it,' said she, much moved.

'Ah, I see you can believe what I say. But you see it is new to you. You may have guessed that you were dear to me, but you could never know all my love. Well, I do not expect *you* to fling yourself into my arms when I first tell you I worship you. Love like yours must be

hardly won, but if I live and you live, Katharine, you shall love me as I love you, and *then*——I would defy heaven itself to afford more happiness than we two could prove together.'

He ended, and she stood silent, rendered dumb and motionless by the wonder and fear she felt at what he said. It was all so true. Her heart and her head alike indorsed every word. He was no common man, she knew that; she was no common woman: how often she had looked on at the dull, domestic everyday maids and matrons whom she saw around her, and longed to be like them, with no more careful heart than theirs.

Yes, every word was true. And when would another love such as this be offered to her? She answered herself at once and promptly—never. Louis' nature and hers, she told herself, were directly opposite and unsympathetic; and yet his love had led him,

all blindfold as he was, and without any external aid, to touch each phase and symptom of her heart's sadness and need with unerring accuracy.

It was wonderful—too wonderful; and it was also very sweet—in spite of herself she felt it so—to know that she, the lonely one, was thought by some one to be the most precious and desirable thing in the world. But if that some one had been a poor working woman or a little child, the sweetness would have been almost as strong as now, when it was Louis Kay, who was able to protect and shelter and surround her with every observance of love and honour. Amidst all the tide of gratitude, wonder, and joy, there was no passion. The stream of feeling ebbed and surged around her, stunning her with its force, but it never carried her from her feet, nor moved her from her vantage-ground of unimpassioned calm.

‘You said awhile ago that you could not

talk to-night,' said Louis, gently, after a time. 'I share your feeling. I would not disturb you nor annoy you for the world, but you must understand that the subject is not at an end. And now, good-night.'

He took her unresisting hand, and at that she raised her clear and serious eyes to his face, then dropped them again, blushing and troubled at the look she met.

'Good - night,' said Louis, stooping, and touching her forehead with his lips.

She returned the valediction mechanically, and he went out of the room, leaving her alone with this problem, which, if not exactly a new one, was at least stated explicitly for the first time.





CHAPTER XIV.

A woman, left alone with all her fears,
Which keep her company by night and day,
And are most constant, fond, and faithful guests.

WILFRID HEALEY had said to his sister, 'I shall take myself away from home, and amuse myself until the men come to their senses.'

This, before long, he proceeded to do. A few days after Katharine's interview with Louis, Wilfrid told her at breakfast that he was going away.

'Where are you going?' asked she. Not for an instant did she think of saying, 'Let us go away together; I should like a change too.' She knew better than to do so.

‘I am going to Manchester to-day,’ he replied deliberately. ‘I haven’t decided yet where I shall go afterwards; very likely to London, but I don’t know at all yet.’

Her face fell as she said, ‘But, Wilfrid, I shall not know where to write to you, or where to send if anything goes wrong. And just now—these Cornish men are beginning to be so very unpleasant, Earnshaw was talking to me about them only yesterday.’

‘If anything goes wrong, you and Earnshaw must put your heads together and make it go right again.’

‘I shall be very lonely,’ said Katharine, looking wistfully at him.

‘Louis Kay will come and see you as often as you like. He is rather fond of coming here.’

Katharine made no reply, and Wilfrid continued—

‘And I particularly wish you to be pleasant to him.’

‘I always am pleasant to him,’ she said, almost inaudibly, knowing how much she desired to have it in her power to be less so.

‘I don’t know when I shall come back,’ continued Wilfrid, ‘so you need not expect me until you see me.’

Katharine said nothing; she was not insensible to the manner in which she was being treated, but had she once allowed a reproach to pass her lips, she could scarcely have answered for her own words. When we permit ourselves to reproach those whom we love very dearly, our very anguish gives a keenness and a poignancy to our utterances; we scarcely know what to say and what to leave unsaid.

That was all the good-bye she got. Wilfrid left about eleven, and she had not the remotest idea where he would go, or what he would do while away. All her fears returned with renewed force—reasonless, aimless, shapeless fears, for the most part, founded upon the

fact that as Wilfrid had never before been at the trouble of concealing his destination from her, she believed he had some motive—a wrong one, of course—for doing so now. She could do nothing, say nothing, but—she wondered if Louis Kay knew anything about it. Wilfrid never spoke of Louis as having any influence over him, but the influence was there, and Katharine knew it—silent and unobtrusive, but deep and strong.

Katharine had of late looked serener and more at rest; but all that expression was gone when she rode up to Healey that morning. All the old eagerness and discontent was there. Wherever she went, she carried with her fear and distrust. The two sensations seemed to clothe her like a garment, and hang before her eyes like a veil.

It seemed as if vexations were to crowd upon her thick and fast, for before she left Ughtred said—

‘Do you think I could see Mr. Healey

to-day? Something ought to be done about these men. There has been a great row in the village: it came off last night. The lock-outs and the Cornishmen, or rather about a dozen of each, were having a regular free fight; and some of the Cornwall men threaten to strike. They say they are not at all comfortable here, and will be sent home again.'

'Oh dear! That's very awkward!'

'You need not be troubled about it. Of course no one but the master can decide what is to be done; but I can see him about it; and it will be time enough this evening, if he is at leisure.'

'Mr. Healey has gone from home,' said Katharine; 'and I do not—know where he has gone—nor when he will return.'

She said this with an immense effort, and then looked at Ughtred with a crimson face. It was such a fearfully humiliating thing to have to confess. She, who had all the hard

work to do, was not sufficiently in the master's confidence to know his address—not even to know whither he had gone, nor when he would return.

There was something, too, that made her feel the mortification doubly in having to confess what had happened to Ughtred Earnshaw. If he had been such a man as Crier or Butterworth, she would merely have spoken with a little extra hauteur and reserve—would have said it was not convenient for him to see Mr. Healey—and would have ordered something to be done on her own responsibility; but she could not act so with Earnshaw.

His calm, dark eyes were fixed upon her face; he could tell in an instant if she cheated or prevaricated before him. It might be humiliating to confess the truth; it would have been ten times more so to have spoken untruth, and known that the untruth was seen through, and that an inferior mistrusted and despised her. An inferior? She put it

in that way; but if he had really been an inferior, she would hardly have felt so intensely sensitive as to his opinion.

She met his glance, as I said, with a conscious face. There was a little surprise both in his look and his tone as he said—

‘That is unfortunate; but as it is so, I must receive my orders from you.’

After which he stood waiting for those orders.

But her usual ready presence of mind had deserted her—it had departed as she told Ughtred of Wilfrid’s absence. Her nerve, as she had owned to herself a short time before, was not what it had been; she could not, as she should have done, put away the annoyance caused by Wilfrid’s behaviour, and turn at once to the practical side of the question—the hostile disposition displayed by the colliers. No; her mind was possessed by the idea that Wilfrid was away: if she displeased him by the way in which

she acted now, he would be severe: she was wearied, her spirit felt numb and dulled with vexation and disappointment, so that she could not grasp the question; it slipped away from her, and eluded her efforts to reason about it.

‘What *am* I to do?’ was the spoken result of her pause of silence.

‘To me the best plan seems that I should tell the men the master is away, and that I can do absolutely nothing until he returns. They will have the sense to see that if they strike now he will certainly not help them home again on his return, and so will possibly keep quiet for a time. But if you have anything else to suggest—’

‘I cannot say that I have. That seems to me the most reasonable way.’

‘So I think; and Mr. Healey can hardly blame us if we do so.’

‘Blame *us*.’ No words could explain how delightful it seemed to Katharine that it

was possible for another than herself to be blamed.

‘Very well,’ said she decisively; ‘do so then, and when we know the result of the meeting we can judge better how to act.’

‘Just so, and I don’t think that you need make yourself in the least degree uneasy about this affair. I am sure it will turn out all right.’

‘Do I look so very miserable?’ she asked, with a faint smile. ‘I *am* bothered just now.’

He knew perfectly well what she meant. Katharine’s grief and patience had reconciled him to her as nothing else could have done: she had made vast strides in his esteem since the night on which she bound up his wounded hand. His hard-and-fast line had swerved—he had actually begun to wonder, now and then, what kind of woman Miss Healey would have been if she had been placed as one of a happy family; if she had had brothers and sisters

and a mother, like other girls. There was to him something inexpressibly saddening in the sight of this young woman's face, which should have been smiling, hopeful, and contented, but which was, in fact, weary, harassed, and worn.

‘Then you will see about this as soon as you find it necessary?’ said Katharine.

‘Yes. Think as little as possible about it.’

She gave a little sigh as she held out her hand, and he, as he took it, looked up at her, and read the trouble of her heart in her face. Distress, but no one to tell it to; weariness, but no friend upon whose support to lean; clouded eyes, telling a too easily read story of

‘Midnight waking, twilight weeping,
Heavy noontide——’

all passed alone and unsolaced And, saddest of all, strength, courage, and endurance wasted for want of a right and noble object upon which to expend themselves—perverted to

self-repression and the renunciation of delight.

Perhaps it was the work of that moment! Perhaps that moment only put a climax to the growing influence of weeks. Be that as it may, every dream in which he loved to indulge, every brightest ambition seemed to dwindle and become small in comparison with the wish that now possessed him—the wish that he, and no other, could find the means of making that sorrow into joy, of turning that grief into gladness. A bootless, barren wish, indeed! Where is there a more thankless task than that of trying to open a woman's eyes to the fact that her idol cares for himself, not for her, that her service is useless, and that she would be happier if she turned to another, who is not her idol, but whose idol she is? Demonstrate the truth to her in a hundred ways, each more excellent than the last, and she will smile, say, 'Yes, I daresay you are

right,' and will go on her way, leaving you with wasted breath for your reward.

Ughtred uttered not a word of all he thought, nor even looked it. Katharine only saw the face of Ughtred Earnshaw, which was not an Adonis face any more than hers was a Venus face, upraised, turned towards her; his eyes, honest, steady, and true, and felt the quiet yet firm clasp of his hand: he had none of your flimsy ways of taking a friend's hand gingerly between the tips of his fingers and letting it fall again as if it were as heavy as lead, and as unsympathetic to his touch as a toadstool—he shook hands honestly and heartily, and the pressure of his fingers was a friendly, if a brief one. His look and his hand-clasp did not make Katharine *glad*, any more than she had been before, but they assured her that she might depend upon one man in the world, and made her feel, with a quick instinct of sympathy, that if she went to

Ughtred Earnshaw in any trouble, he would help her if he could.

Katharine rode home, to solitude and lunch as she supposed, but on her arrival she was told that Mrs. Kay was there, and had been waiting some quarter of an hour to see her.

Katharine went to her own sitting-room, and found Mrs. Kay there, with a volume of poetry in her hands.

‘I am glad to see you,’ said Katharine.

‘Are you? You never come to see me at any rate. I hear that Wilfrid is away from home.’

‘Yes, he left this morning; but who told you?’

‘Louis. No one else is likely to have told me.’

‘True,’ said Katharine, knitting her brows, and wondering *when* Louis had told his mother.

'A friend of mine is in the village, Katharine, and is coming here to call for me, the Rev. Mr. Gamaliel. I meant to have gone home to lunch, but as Wilfrid is away, I wish you would ask us both to stay.'

'Oh, certainly. He is a clergyman then?'

'Yes, he is; a most excellent character; a true preacher of the gospel. Purcell Gamaliel is his name; highly evangelical.'

'*Highly* evangelical? I thought they were rather low people.'

'Katharine! But I forgive you. He preaches extempore sermons. And the fact is, Katharine, I wish that he and Lowe would exchange. Their livings are of exactly the same value, but Gamaliel's is in the south. So I have arranged that he shall preach at Hamerton Church one Sunday while he is here, and then I shall see what success he has. For my own part, I think him admirable.'

'I wish you had invited Mr. Lowe to

have the conference here,' said Katharine sedately, 'as I am a neutral kind of person, you know ; it would have been rather amusing.'

'I wish you would not talk in such a dreadfully matter-of-fact way. "Rather amusing," when such vital interests are at stake.'

'I don't consider them vital, you know.'

'So I should suppose. How are you to know that the parish of Hamerton is going to rack and ruin?'

'Indeed.'

'The Ormerods have completely gone over to Bridgefold parish. There has been a bazaar there, and Mrs. Ormerod has done wonders for it.'

'No? How nice of her!'

'I wouldn't say this to any one but yourself, Kate, but I do detest that woman, though her views upon Church matters are quite sound. But she has the spirit of a petty tradesman. She has been selling some kind of flimsy work-tables which she buys for next

to nothing (and they are worth less even than that), and sells at an immense profit. Of course the money goes to the bazaar, but *I* say it is cruelty to animals not to let her keep it herself. How she would enjoy it!

‘Delightful woman!’ sneered Katharine. ‘If only she had been placed as head of a small retail business! There her talents would have had scope, and she might have been a useful and a happy woman. In her present position she is clean thrown away.’

At this moment Mr. Gamaliel was announced.

Mr. Gamaliel would have been pronounced by an ordinary observer to be a small, even an insignificant man; but there is a philosophy, as profound as it is cheerful, which teaches that a man is what he chooses to be. Speaking from this point of view, I should describe Mr. Gamaliel as being taller than Mrs.

Kay, Miss Healey (neither of whom were small women), and the maid who showed him into the room, all put together. After Mrs. Kay's introduction, Katharine said that that lady was going to remain to lunch, and she hoped Mr. Gamaliel would do so too. With patronising condescension the invitation was accepted, and the curiously assorted trio went to the dining-room.

As Mr. Gamaliel was making some investigations in the village, he took his leave soon after lunch; and Katharine, when she parted with him, had not the least idea that he was in any way connected with her destiny, or with the destiny of any connection of hers. Why should she, indeed?

'Where has Wilfrid gone?' asked Mrs. Kay, when Mr. Gamaliel had left.

'I don't know anything about him. He has gone to enjoy himself while these weavers are on strike.'

'Why didn't he take you? He ought to

have done so. If I had seen him, I should have told him so.'

'He pleases himself about most things.'

'But it is extremely selfish of him. Unless he is as blind as a bat, he might see how pale and fagged you look. Katharine, you want a change; you are not fit to go on month after month in this way. And you shall have a change, too, before this year is out, or my name is not Frances Kay.'

'It is useless to be calling out "I will" and "I shall" in that way. It only looks undignified, and does no good. If I were to do so, Wilfrid would be very much amused, nothing more. I have learnt not only to give up my own will, but to make a point of doing so, and take rather a pride in it.'

'Learnt a fiddlestick end! Remember, Katharine, I mean you to go away from Hamerton this autumn, if I take you away myself.'

'You little know what you are talking

about. *When* you have got Wilfrid's consent to my leaving, I'll go with you wherever you choose to take me, and stay with you as long as you like to keep me.'

'I shall hold you to your promise,' said Mrs. Kay, taking her leave.





CHAPTER XV.

'A man may love a woman perfectly,
And yet by no means ignorantly maintain
A thousand women have not larger eyes.
Enough that she alone has looked at him
With eyes that, large or small, have won his soul.'

—MRS BROWNING.

TGHRED EARNSHAW, after Katharine's departure that morning, went about his work until the men 'knocked off' for dinner. Then he was free to go home to dine and to reflect.

It seemed to him that his mind was overcrowded with thoughts—tumultuous thoughts, some of which must be got into order before he could attain any clear knowledge of his own mental state. After some consideration he found that two ideas had the ascendancy,

one springing so naturally from the other that they could not be separated ; resentment against his master, and an altogether inexplicable sensation regarding that master's sister.

His thoughts were far from being connected ; they were vague, loose, and confused ; he hardly knew how they arose, but taken altogether they ran somewhat as they are here given.

'The brute !' thought Mr. Earnshaw, angrily. 'He's a regular bully, and I've no doubt a coward as well.' In that surmise Ughtred made one of those bad shots at the truth ; for Wilfrid, whatever his faults, was certainly no coward.

'To walk off in that way without telling her where he was going, or for how long His insolence to her is unbearable. I'd like to knock him down and thrash him—— Poor thing ! Her face is the saddest I ever saw. Her eyes look as if they never rested on anything pleasant from year's end to year's

end——. When she confessed that he had left her in such utter ignorance of his intentions, I felt ashamed to look at her, and obliged to do so at the same time. She was bitterly mortified—*what right* has he to humiliate her before his servants—the cad! I could see it from the way in which she blushed, and from the quiver of her lip. Certainly it was only for a moment, but it takes a great deal to make her look agitated, even for a moment. I fear I'm a blundering sort of fellow. I spoke on the impulse of the moment; I wonder whether I said what was right. How she does love that man, too! He it is who makes her life so wretched, and yet she stands up for him as if he were a god. I believe he is all the god she has. She must be very lonely——. For all her sadness and coldness, she has sometimes such a kind look. The other day, when Mary Greenwood's little child came up to her—she didn't know I saw it—and touched her hand because it

had a diamond ring upon it, oh, how full of yearning her face was as she kissed the little thing! And she can be kind too. I shall never forget how tenderly she bound up my wrist that night.' (Here he looked reflectively at that member). 'And when she thanked me for having "saved Wilfrid," how thoroughly ashamed of myself I felt, to be sure! I must have looked a fool. I know I felt one. I suppose she is not what people call pretty or handsome; no, she is certainly not that; there is little harmony in her features, and no softness in her manner. But what an attractive face she has! No beauty could have the spell that lies in her face. There is always something fresh in it. Her eyebrows come in such a level thoughtful line across her eyes; and her eyes themselves, I never saw any like them. *Sometimes* they have a look of her brother's, that look which Jeanie Deans said "gar'd the skin to creep and the knee to bend," and

yet they are so clear and steady and modest. Her mouth too. Sometimes it is merely stern ; it expresses nothing, but at other times it curves downwards so sadly. A woman might weep to see one of her sisters so sorrowful. I think it is hopelessness which gives her that look. And yet that mouth can smile very sweetly—; but the smile is gone almost before you know it is there. It vanishes, and you almost wonder how those lips could smile at all——. If I were her brother—but that's nonsense. Still, it would do Wilfrid Healey no harm to kiss away a little of the sadness from those lips. She loves him so much that even a few kisses would make her happier, and teach her to smile oftener.' (Here ensued the longest pause of all, and then he added to himself)—'She asked me to be her friend ; she asked me twice. Of course it was only because she was too proud to let me do as a servant that for which she could not pay

me as a servant. Still she asked me to be her friend, and—— Is it base of me, I wonder, that I am glad she was obliged to do it? I like to feel that she *cannot* look upon me as one of the herd of people whom she orders about as her brother's servants——.'

Mrs. Holden entered.

'Eh, lad, you're a sittin' dreamin' away there, and yon pudden's fair cowl on th' 'ob. I were surprised 'at you niver sounded yon little bell, so I said to Sara, I'st go and see what yon chap's afther, for he's that habsent he'd niver know, not if he got no pudden at o'; and I do believe it's true.'

'I believe it is, Mrs. Holden; I had quite forgotten my dinner.'

'Ay for sure had you. And your ale there's fair flat for want o' drinkin'. Coom, lad, do fettle oop and get thy food, or thou'll be clemmed, and all thy own fault.'

He laughed as Mrs. Holden put down the 'pudden' which had been so ill-treated.

But he felt a kind of vague unrest at something, and on reflecting found it to arise from the fact that Mrs. Holden, and not Sara, served him. Sara was silent; her mother was garrulous, and hence arose his mental disturbance.

‘Where is Sara?’ he asked, for Mrs. Holden remained to see him help himself to the pudding.

‘Hoo’s vary throng o’ work to-day. You seen hoo canna go to the factory just i’ now, so I’ve settl’t for her to go and see her hant’ (aunt) ‘down i’ th’ south. Hoo’s bin vary pressin’ for Sara to go this long while, but I’ve ne’er seen my way to lettin’ t’ lass go, not till now. And hoo has her clawse’ (clothes) ‘to fettle oop a bit thou known, and a two-three new uns to geet, and hoo’s boun’ off to-morn by t’ seven o’clock train.’

‘It’s a nice opportunity for her to see the world,’ said he, smiling.

‘Ay, it is. I’ve ne’er bin beyond Manchester mysel’. I’m none so fain o’ going rampagin’ about th’ country, fair like a boggart let loose. I’d a hant as had gone about a deal, and it made her uncommon peart. I’ve heard her mysel’ say a thing to th’ parson as fair fleyed me.’

She paused, evidently expecting him to inquire further, which he did, and Mrs. Holden continued, in a narrative style peculiarly her own—

‘Well, it were rayther a sharp sort o’ thing too. I couldna’ hold mysel’ fro’ laughin’ for all I were some and fleyed, hoo said it so cool, like. Vicar had coom to see her. It were th’ owd ’un, afore this Lowe. He said, afther he’d ast her how hoo were, “Well, Betty, my woman, and has Mr. Pardoe bin to see you latterly?” He were t’ curit, were Pardoe. “Ay,” says my hant “he ’as. I wish you’d tell him not to come so hoften, for I’m fair stalled o’ t’ curits.

And last time he were here, I were forced to show him his proper place." "Law, hant!" says I, for I were shamed like for her to speak so to parson; but hoo went on as cool as owt; "He tow'd me as if I didna' repent and mend my ways, I'st go to t' bad spot, wheer there's weepin' and gneshin' o' teeth, and I were ill-vexed to hear him say such a thing to me, so I ups and says, "Let them gnesh as 'as 'em. I've ne'er had a tooth i' my yead these twenty year." ' And he'd nowt to say for hissel'. I fair trembled when hoo made an end, but th' parson did nowt not but roar wi' laughin' fit to brast hissel', and says he, "Eh, yon Pardoe's a sly dog; he ne'er told me he'd had the worst on't. It's best thing I've heard this long time." I were well content to see him tak' it i' that gate, thou known.'

'Very sensible man,' said Ughtred, nearly stunned with her volubility. 'And now, Mrs. Holden, I've quite finished. Thank you for

looking after me so well.' And he looked at her with a smile at once amused and grateful.

'Eh, it's no trouble. But thou'rt vary different fro' what yon Ab' used to be. He olez said as Providence 'ud provide, and as the righteous was never left to want, but I reckon he thowt me a part o' Providence; he were ready enough to sing out if he hadn't all to his mind. I never caught *him* forgettin' his pudden nor his ale naythur for that matter,' as she pointed to that yet remaining in Earnshaw's glass.

'What time did you say Sara was going?'

'By t' seven o'clock train to-morn.'

'Has she any one to see her off?'

'Nobbut me, and I can't abide takin' tickets, and sich like. Yon young wastrel up at station as gives out tickets has imperence for owt, and ne'er gives you time to count yer money.'

'I'll go with her, Mrs. Holden, so you need not trouble about it.'

‘Eh, you’re vary kind indeed. I’m sure t’ lass will be well pleased ; hoo’s uncommon fleyed at havin’ to go by hersel’.’

And with murmuring words testifying her gratitude, Mrs. Holden swept away the crockery and disappeared. Earnshaw’s mind at once harked back to what had occupied it before her entrance.

‘Still, she asked me to be her friend. And if I live and have opportunity, I will be her friend. It’s not much that ever I can do for her : she is a lady, and I am a workman. I can only help her in a working way, not in her worst troubles ; but if I could only do something to make her pay me again with such words and such looks as on that night’ (it will be seen that some particular evening seems to figure very conspicuously in Mr. Earnshaw’s mind)—‘if I could do that, I think I should be as happy (and as foolishly so, too) as any man in England.’

Two o'clock sounded from the church, and Ughtred started up.

'Late, for the first time,' he remarked to himself. 'It's all that gabbling old lady, Mrs. Holden. What a tongue she has, to be sure!'





CHAPTER XVI.

‘What was I that I should love her, save for competence to pain?’

—MRS. BROWNING.

IN the morning Ughtred stood with Sara Holden upon the platform of the station. He was trying to explain the route she had to take. She had to go ‘beyond London,’ and appeared very timorous about it.

‘I’st be all right when I’se *gotten* to London,’ she kept saying. ‘I care’na for owt then, but I’m sore fleyed ’at I’se ne’er get there at o’.’

‘Oh, that will be the easiest part of the business,’ said he. ‘I’m sorry you have to

change stations in London. Now, do you remember. It is from Waterloo Bridge that you have to go on to——'

'Oh, ay, I'st be all reet there,' responded Sara, with the utmost cheerfulness.

Then the train came in, Ughtred put her into the carriage, shook hands with her, wished her a prosperous journey, and went away. But on his way up to Healey he could not help wondering how it was that Sara, though so timorous about crossing Manchester, where her native dialect was understood, and where there was nothing to fear, was yet so perfectly easy about London, seeming to have no fear that she should not get on there. Yet he had once heard her say, in a moment of expansiveness, that 'Manchester were bad enough, but from all she'd heerd tell, London must be a terble (terrible) place for gettin' lost in.'

Ughtred shook his head, and decided with

some complacency that girls (meaning Sara Holden) were strange beings.

At that time he certainly did feel complacent, with that pleasant complacency which makes us feel at peace with all the world: we long to shake hands with our worst enemy, because we feel that he must be so much worse off than ourselves; and we are even inclined to see modifying qualities in those dark and doubtful characters, our superiors—those people who are richer, wittier, more popular than we are, but whom we would gladly consider less so. This kind of complacency is mostly shortlived: a small shock is enough to upset its equilibrium, and over it goes; our brief span of optimism is over, and we are pessimists again. We may desire, and our desires may be gratified, but in a manner which makes the gratification the very opposite to what our souls craved.

The morning passed on, till Ughtred, at his

desk, heard the sound of Katharine's arrival, and raising his head to listen, became conscious of other sounds accompanying that of her horse's hoofs—the sound of men's voices—and he looked up to see who was coming.

Katharine Healey on horseback, and two gentlemen on foot. He needed not to look twice to recognise Louis Kay; the other he did not know, but he has already been introduced to your notice as the Reverend Mr. Gamaliel. They came up to the office door, and Katharine called—

‘Mr. Earnshaw, will you come here?’

When he appeared, she, as usual, held out her hand. Ughtred saw the action watched by Louis Kay. But what of that? The moment had come that he had once imagined, and in imagining had allowed distrust to mingle with his thought. But his distrust had been wrong. Katharine Healey had to own him as her friend, and did so promptly.

'I want to let this gentleman, Mr Gamaliel, see over the works,' said Katharine. 'He does not want to go down into the pit——'

A certain startled expression upon Mr. Gamaliel's face seemed to say that to him the words were familiar. He might have heard them in dreams, or he might have said them in sermons,—*que sais je ?*

'No ?' said Ughtred.

'But to see as much as he can without that. So if you will go with him, I will just look at the letters.'

'Very well,' said Earnshaw, going into the office for his hat, and as he came out again he saw Louis lift Katharine from her horse; his head was bent very close to hers, and he smiled, saying something in a low voice.

Ughtred could not see Katharine's face, but Louis' was in full view, and its expression was both tender and gallant.

That little scene was the blow that knocked

over Ughtred's complacency, and left it ignominiously level with the dust. Louis had greeted him with a nod, good-humoured enough, but quite indifferent.

He conducted Mr. Gamaliel over the colliery, and explained to him all he wanted to know, seeing all the time little else than that one little scene—Louis lifting Katharine from her horse, his glance and his smile. When he and Mr. Gamaliel returned, Katharine and Louis were still in the office—Katharine with a heap of letters before her, some of which she seemed to have read, though the more part of them were untouched. She was standing at the desk, and Louis was resting one elbow upon it, his eyes upon her face. They lingered there, thought Ughtred, as if they liked what they saw too well to be in any hurry to withdraw.

As for Katharine herself, she was holding converse with a small boy, who had presented himself with the abrupt remark—

‘My mother mun ha’ a load o’ coils, hoo wants ’em to-neet or first thing to-morn.’

‘Does she?’ said Katharine, surveying the urchin with no unkindly glance; ‘and what if she can’t have them?’

‘Hoo sayn as if hoo canna ha’ ’em, hoo’ll go reet off to Cheetham’s, and hoo’ll ne’er buy another aw’poth’ (half-penny worth) ‘fro’ Healey’s, not as lung as hoo lives, hoo winna.’

‘Oh, dear!’ cried Katharine, turning with a look of mock horror to Louis. ‘That will be dreadful! You must tell Mr. Earnshaw, and see what he can do for you. Perhaps you’d like to go down into the mine and choose for yourself?’

‘Nay — there’s a boggart down i’ th’ pit. Our Adam says so.’

‘Dear Katharine,’ said Louis, with a laugh, ‘how can you tease the child so?’

Those were the words Ughtred heard as he and Mr. Gamaliel came upon the scene.

There was a change when they had entered the office. Louis roused himself from his attitude of lazy, contented abstraction ; and Katharine, recalled to her pile of letters, said—

‘ Louis, can you wait five minutes ?’

‘ Five thousand, if it would in any way serve you.’

‘ I must just look at these letters, and see if I have anything to say to Mr. Earnshaw about them, and then I will join you.’

Taking the hint, Louis and Mr. Gamaliel withdrew to the outside, and Mr. Gamaliel, like the busy bee spoken of by Dr. Watts, intent to ‘ improve each shining hour,’ began to catechise the youth whose mother had sent him for coals.

‘ My boy, what is your name ?’

‘ Ben.’

‘ And your father’s name ?’

‘ Tom o’ Ned’s.’

‘They have no surnames here,’ explained Louis, with gravity.

‘Do you go to the Sunday school?’

‘Ay—now ’n’ then, like.’

‘What do you learn there?’

‘Nowt.’

‘Oh yes, you do. Can you tell me who built the Ark?’

‘Nooa’ (meaning no).

‘Noah — No-ah’ (very distinctly); ‘not Nooah.’

The youth gazed at the engaging countenance of Mr. Gamaliel, and finding that it, combined with the above remark, was somewhat wanting in intelligence, made answer, composedly—

‘Thou’rt a foo’.

Mr. Gamaliel was a south-country man; but the northern and southern pronunciation of the word ‘fool’ does not vary so far that he could not now recognise it. He said, severely—

‘You’re a rude boy, sir.’

The 'rude boy' was now indifferently whistling to a lean-looking cur that was hovering round the gates, and his back was towards Mr. Gamaliel, whose reproof was passed over in silent contempt. The next time that the Lancashire oracle spoke, it was to say,

'I wish yon woman 'ud be sharp out o' that hoile' (hole, place), 'so's I could tell yon chap about them coïls.'

He had not to wait long. Katharine appeared at the door, saying good morning to Earnshaw, and then, after a moment, they went slowly out of the yard, Katharine and Louis seemingly in earnest conversation, while Mr. Gamaliel walked gloomily a little apart, seriously considering whether he would not be wasted in a place where even extreme youth—youth, too, of the lower orders—did not hesitate to call its spiritual guide a fool on those points with respect to which the youth's and the spiritual guide's views differed.

To-day, also, Ughtred returned to Mrs. Holden, and to dinner. On this occasion also his thoughts were of Katharine; but to-day a new image made itself conspicuous upon his mental retina—the image of Louis Kay.

He reflected upon Katharine's wasted, loveless life, and saw plainly how precious to her must naturally be any deep, disinterested affection. She and Louis Kay——. His reason assented to the idea; he saw that it was most probable, most natural, but he could not regard it with the least enthusiasm.

He had gone out that morning cheerful, elastic, complacent; he went out in the afternoon disposed to regard life in general as a muddle. Was it worth his while to give his energies, such as they were, towards attempting to unravel a small portion of that hopeless coil?

On Sunday, Katharine, yielding to Mrs.

Kay's persuasions, went to lunch with her at Stanlaw, and found the house full of visitors.

But after lunch Katharine somehow found herself alone with Louis, pacing about the terrace.

'Louis, do you know where Wilfrid is?' she asked, almost timidly.

'I? No.'

'How strange, how very strange of him not to tell *you*!'

'I do not see the peculiarity. And now, Katharine, to question you—do you always shake hands with your manager?'

'With Mr. Earnshaw? Always.'

Her tone did not encourage further questioning, yet Louis went on, quietly—

'Don't you think people of that kind are apt to be lifted out of their places by such—consideration?'

'I do not suppose it possible for Mr. Earnshaw to forget himself. If he did,

the remedy is easy — he would be dismissed.'

Then, after a pause, she added, with a deeply annoyed expression—

'I think, Louis, you are very impertinent.'

'Nothing could be further from my wish, but——'

'Listen!' said she impatiently, and with a quick frown. 'That night that Wilfrid ——' She bit her lip. Had not Wilfrid forbidden her to speak of that?

'I know all about it,' said Louis, tranquilly.

'If Earnshaw had not come up just in time, Wilfrid might have been killed. And he has lightened my anxiety no little by promising to have an eye to Crier. I am indebted to him. I honour him. I consider him my friend.'

'Surely, Katharine, you are very severe. I am sorry if I have offended you.'

'Why did you ask me such a question?'

she asked, flashing round upon him in a manner rare indeed with her.

‘It was most unfortunate,’ said he, bowing deeply, ‘and I can but apologise again, Katharine.’

It was not his intention to quarrel with her, but he was aware that a few words from his lips had great weight with her.

END OF VOL. I.



